

BRIDGING

5 Chapters of Your Life

May 5, 2013

DAY 1

This week we finish up our 5 Chapters series. To understand what God is trying to do in your life, think in these five categories: Brokenness, Beloved, Belonging, Building, and Bridging.

BRIDGING: GOD WANTS TO USE YOUR LIFE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE!

BONUS: watch the following music video, entitled, "Beloved."

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSIVjjY8Ou8&feature=youtube_gdata_player

1. Your life is not meant to be the story of your needs met. God wants to use your life to make a difference in the world! Read...

2 Corinthians 5:11 Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men....¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

2. What did Paul once live for? (v. 15)

3. What is he living for now? (v. 15)

4. What did living for Jesus Christ (v. 15) mean in his relationships with men and women? (v. 11)

5. What motivated Paul to be involved with people? (v. 14)

6. What would it mean to have the "love of Christ compel" you?

7. Are you *engaged* with people? Are you taking the initiative to love some of them? To talk with them?

8. Do you see yourself as a man or woman *on mission*?

Ask God to give you a heart for people.

DAY 2

2 Corinthians 5:16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

1. In Paul's past, how did he regard people? (v. 16)

2. What do you think he meant by regarding people "from a *worldly* point of view?" (v. 16)

3. How do you think the way he regarded people changed? (v. 16-17)

4. Our possessions and things are temporal. They last for a time, only. People are immortal. They will live through all eternity, long past this life. You have an opportunity to make an *eternal* difference with people. How does that strike you?

2 Cor. 5:18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

5. To whom has the ministry of reconciliation been given? (v. 18)

6. You are included in the "us" in v. 18! This ministry is not just pastor-types. Every Christian shares in this ministry.

7. Who is doing the reconciling? (19)

8. What keeps men from being reconciled to God? (v. 19)

9. What thought strikes you from today's study?

DAY 3

2 Cor. 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1. Paul describes himself and the men who were ministering with him as "Christ's ambassadors." What is the job of an ambassador? What are some things an ambassador does?

2. An ambassador may be or do any of the following:

a. A diplomatic official of the highest rank, sent by one sovereign or state to another as its resident representative.

b. A diplomatic official of the highest rank sent by a government to represent it on a temporary mission, as for negotiating a treaty.

c. A diplomatic official serving as permanent head of a country's mission to the United Nations or some other international organization.

d. An authorized messenger or representative.

After reading these definitions of an ambassador, what do you think Paul is getting at by calling himself an ambassador of Christ?

3. There is no higher calling in this world--representing Jesus Christ to others. This is what gives you your greatest sense of mission and purpose.

4. As ambassadors, we represent our King, the Lord Jesus. How do you think you're doing in representing Jesus Christ to others?

5. What thoughts come to your mind in regards to representing Jesus to some folks in your life?

6. List a few names. Spend a few minutes praying for them, and asking God to give you a heart for them. Ask Him also to open doors to how you can represent Him well.

DAY 4

Ephesians 6:19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

1. As we saw previously, Paul called himself an "ambassador." He does so here, again in Ephesians. But what is added in Ephesians 6:20?

2. Paul wrote Ephesians from prison! Did being in prison affect how he saw himself or his mission?

3. Did doing God's will necessarily give him an easier life?

4. Is it possible that Paul's ministry was *helped*(!) by his imprisonment? In the letter to the Philippians, Paul gives details about how imprisonment actually advanced the gospel!

Philippians 1:12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.¹³ As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.¹⁴ Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.¹⁵ It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.¹⁶ The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.¹⁷ The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.¹⁸ But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice,

5. How did the ministry advance through Paul's hardship?

6. How would you describe Paul's attitude as he writes this letter?

7. How would his rejoicing attitude have played a role in advancing the gospel, and sharing Christ with the jailers and other prisoners?

8. You may think you're in no shape to share Jesus. You're wrong! What do you take away from today's study?

DAY 5

A month ago, a USC student came to our church and shared his vision to share Christ in China.

Bonus: check out his video! <https://www.dropbox.com/s/u3en8l2rnb7epq2/041013%20UC%20Sharing.m4v>

1. What struck you from the video?

2. What did you see on the faces of the students?

3. What struck you about the young man's gospel presentation?

4. This week, we studied Paul's approach to "BRIDGING," making a difference in the lives of people God puts around you. He had to endure multiple times of suffering. No one survives the harsh, abusive treatment he endured without living for something bigger than himself.

5. Ministering to people is hard. Not many people appreciate the efforts you make. Many are critical. Sometimes your efforts seem wasted. As committed and strong as Paul was, he was not immune to such "failure."

Galatians 4:11 I am afraid I have labored over you in vain.

Galatians 6:14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

6. What things from this verse kept Paul going?

7. God is committed to stretching your heart, making Chapter 5 to become a reality in your life. You are to be a "bridger," taking the gospel to people God puts around you.

8. This is your final purpose, and the most complete one. You do not exist for yourself. You belong to God and are to give your life away to people.