

Walking Across the Jesus Bridge Ephesians 2:1-10

Introduction:

1. Have you ever read the Guinness Book of World Records? You will never read such a collection of stupid, crazy, bizarre things that people do. I'm thinking, "Why in the world did they do that?"
2. People do the craziest things in order to feel like their life has some sort of meaning, purpose, or significance. People look to fame, financial success, pleasure, powers, material possessions, etc.
3. But these things will not bring true meaning and significance to life – oh, maybe for a few short years, but like a little speck in human history, it is soon forgotten.
4. Did you know that your life can have eternal significance? I'm talking about true meaning that will last forever! Here is the key though: before your life can have **eternal** significance, you must have a relationship with an **eternal** God.
5. Some picture the path to heaven as a ladder you climb - every good deed you do lifts you up another rung on the ladder.
6. But this is not what the Bible teaches. Read **John 14:6**.
 - Instead of a ladder, visualize a bridge from earth to heaven. Jesus is the bridge to heaven!
7. Two questions: "Have you walked across the Jesus Bridge?" "Do you have a relationship with God and His Son, Jesus Christ?"
8. True meaning will never come to your life until that issue is settled. Every person must walk across the Jesus Bridge. Why is this so crucial? Let's look at Ephesians 2.

First, because of the gap that exists between mankind and God.

1. What is the purpose of a bridge? Why do we build bridges? Because of gaps! There is land here and land there and a gap in between. That gap may be due to a mighty river or a huge canyon or a busy freeway.
 - These gaps create a problem trying to get from point A to point B, so what do we do? We build a bridge.
2. Did you know that a huge gap exists between mankind and God? Let's look into God's Word and see what it says about that gap. All of mankind is:
 - **Walking the wrong path** - 2:2
 - *"...the course of this world"* - The Bible teaches that there is a broad path that this world is walking. It is a path of rebellion against God and His Word.
Matthew 7:13
 - **Possessing the wrong spirit** - 2:2
 - *"...prince of the power of the air"* is referring to Satan. The satanic spirit of rebellion and disobedience is said to be working in mankind.
 - **Born in the wrong family** - 2:3
 - Notice the word "all." We are all said to be children of wrath. Jesus said, *"Ye are of your father the devil."* We are in the wrong family. vs. 2 - *"...children of disobedience."*

3. How did it happen? It says, "*by nature.*" We are all sinners by nature and we disobey God very naturally because of the sin nature that has been passed on to us. **Romans 5:12**
4. So do you see that gap that has been created between us and God? It is because of our sin and disobedience. Notice **Ephesians 2:1** - "*dead in trespasses and sins*"
 - Not physically, but spiritually. "Dead in sins" means we do not possess the life of God. There is a separation that has taken place because of sin.
 - There is a gap keeping us from being able to reach God and dwell with Him eternally.
5. But now - enter the picture, Jesus Christ. He came "*to seek and to save that which was lost.*" **Ephesians 1:7**
 - He came to redeem us or purchase us, to buy us out of the slave market of sin. He came to make it possible for us to be redeemed back to God. How did He accomplish this? This verse says, "*through his blood.*"
6. Jesus came to span the gap between sinful mankind and a holy, righteous God. He came to be the bridge that we could walk across to get to God.
7. Only **He** can qualify to be that bridge. He was fully God and fully man. Think about it - nothing else would work. Only a perfect, sinless **God** could qualify as our substitute, but only **man** can shed blood and die for our sins and take the death payment we owe.
8. He was the God-Man. He was the perfect bridge to bring God and man together. He is the **only** bridge.

Second, because true life doesn't begin until you walk across the Jesus Bridge.

1. The people Paul is writing to had walked across the Jesus Bridge. vs. 1
 - "Quicken" means to vitalize, to make alive. **Illustration:** vital signs
2. When you walk across the Jesus Bridge you get a new life. **John 10:10**
You have a new life, free from your past. 2:4-6
 - Verse 5 – "saved" means "delivered," but delivered from what? All the lusts and sins and disobedience of vs. 2-3. When you walk across the Jesus Bridge, you are free from all of that.
 - Verse 6 - "*raised up*" - This is a resurrection taking place. You are raised up from your dead and sinful past. It means a whole new life. **Romans 6:3-4;**
2 Corinthians 5:17

You have a new life of purpose in the present. 2:10

 - The moment you trust Christ, God places His Spirit within you so that you have the empowerment to serve Him. **Titus 2:14**
 - Your life now has true meaning and purpose as you seek to glorify God and impact people through your good works. You are created "*in Christ Jesus*" for a purpose.

You have a new life that will last for eternity. 2:6-7

 - This new life that you get when you walk across the Jesus Bridge is not for 10 or 20 or even 100 years. This new life and the impact of it reaches out into eternity.

- Notice "*ages to come.*" Would you like to be around making a difference in the eternal "*ages to come?*" You have to walk across the Jesus Bridge. Look at the end of verse 7 - it all happens "*through Christ Jesus.*"
3. True life doesn't begin until you walk across the Jesus Bridge.

In Conclusion:

1. Do you know what the greatest part of all of this is? The way you walk across the Jesus Bridge is by simple faith - period. 2:8-9
2. There is no work you can do to gain access to the Jesus Bridge. If you try to cross it based on your goodness and works, there's a big sign - Access Denied!
3. **Romans 6:23** expresses it perfectly:
 - "*For the wages of sin is death*" - there is that gap we talked about between us and God.
 - "*...but the gift of God is eternal life*" - God desires for us to live with Him for eternity.
 - "*...through Jesus Christ our Lord*" - there is the bridge that makes it all possible for us to dwell with God and have a relationship with Him.
4. Have you ever believed on Jesus Christ and opened up your heart to Him? Have you ever received Him as your Savior? Why don't you do that today and walk across the bridge that Jesus has provided for you.

Becoming a Bridge for Others to Get to Jesus

Introduction:

1. When we look through history, the very earliest bridges were natural bridges. Men didn't build them. They were the result of God's marvelous creation.
2. This is a wonderful reminder that God Himself is a bridge builder. Last Sunday we talked about Jesus being the bridge for all mankind to get to God. **1 Timothy 2:5**
3. But here is the question for today, "How will people know about Jesus and the bridge He has provided for them to get to heaven?" In other words, how will they come to Jesus?
4. They need a bridge! They need somebody to be a bridge so they can get to **the** Bridge - Jesus Christ.
5. Did you know that God has left some natural bridges for people to cross to get to Jesus? They are the bridges of human relationships (**John 20:21**). Let me give you an example:
 - **John 1:6-8** - John the Baptist was a forerunner of Jesus Christ. God revealed to John that his own cousin (Jesus) was the Messiah, the Son of God. vs. 29-34
 - But now let's move on to verses 35-39. These are two men that are hanging out with John. They hear him say, "This is him!" and the next day they walk across the John the Baptist bridge to come to Jesus and become followers of Jesus. But it gets better.
 - One of them was Andrew (vs. 40). What does he do? He finds his brother, Simon Peter (vs. 41-42). Peter walks across the Andrew bridge and comes to Jesus. There is no fanfare, no tent or crusade or TV program - he simply walks across the Andrew bridge.
 - Now look at verse 43. How did this happen? Verse 44 - Philip walks across the Andrew and Peter bridge.
 - Verse 45 - Nathaniel walks across the Philip bridge and comes to Jesus.
6. This incredible story continues today - people reaching people with whom they have relationships. No technology will ever replace it. There is nothing more powerful than the natural bridge of human relationships.
7. The gospel of Jesus Christ and its power surges through the network of human relationships. It is so natural, so powerful, so effective, so life-changing, so simple, yet so timeless.
8. Believer, no matter who you are, or what your personality type or what your background, you are **someone's** bridge to Jesus.
9. We said last week that a people's lives will never find true meaning until they walk across the Jesus Bridge. But after you do this, do you want your life to really take on special meaning and have eternal impact? Become the bridge for others that God intended for you to be.
10. Let's look into God's Word and see how we can become bridges for others to get to Jesus.

First, you can become a bridge for your family.

1. Let's look at a few Bible examples of this:

- **John 4:53** - the ruler's son was healed and he became a bridge for his entire family.
 - **Acts 16:14-15** - Lydia, the first European convert, became a bridge for her entire household.
 - **Acts 16:30-34** - The Philippian jailor became a bridge for his entire family.
2. Think about not only your immediate family, but your extended family - brother, sister, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, nieces, parents, etc.
 3. Are there some that do not know Christ as Savior? God desires to use you to be the bridge to bring them to Jesus, and you can be!

Second, you can become a bridge for your friends.

1. Let's look at a few Bible examples of this:
 - **Mark 5:19** - Jesus said, "Go and be a bridge." He wanted to hang out with Jesus, but Jesus said, "No, you have some bridge work to do."
 - When a person gets saved, they have, on average, 12 friends who are lost without Christ. After a few years that number drops to four. Why is this? We are like this guy. All we want to do is hang out with the Jesus crowd.
 - Remember, Jesus was a friend of sinners. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He knew His job was to a bridge builder and now it is our job.
 - **Acts 10:24** - Cornelius was a bridge for all of his family and friends. They walked across the Cornelius bridge.
2. Do you have any friends that do not know Christ as Savior? God wants you to be their bridge to come to Christ.

Third, you can become a bridge for your associates.

1. What do I mean by this? They are those you associate with by virtue of work, the same ball team, the gym, beautician, college, school, club, etc. They are people you see and rub shoulders with regularly.
2. Who is going to be the bridge for them to cross to get to Jesus? Think about it - you know Jesus, and you know them. They are in your life for a reason.
3. A great Bible example is **Mark 2:14-17**.
 - Matthew comes to Jesus in verse 14. The next scene, they are eating in Matthew's house and he has invited all his co-workers to come and dine with Jesus. vs. 15
4. I know it may be more fun to have the L.I.F.E. Group over, but why not have a Matthew party? Invite some co-workers and church friends over to your house and let them rub shoulders. They may learn that Christians are not freaks of nature. We're real people.
5. You say, "One of them might cuss or say something inappropriate." The Pharisees were worried about this too (vs. 16). What was Jesus' answer? vs. 17
6. We need to put aside our sanctimonious attitude and be a friend of sinners like Jesus.

In Conclusion:

1. God created you in Christ Jesus to become a bridge for others to come to Jesus.

2. You don't have to memorize 50 verses of the Bible, or have perfect attendance for a year at church, or be a "perfect" Christian to be a bridge. You simply have to:
 - Care - Christ's love is communicated by your caring.
 - Be a friend - people that don't know Christ need a friend. Who better than somebody who knows the Lord?
 - Pray - **Romans 10:1**
 - Share with them honestly what Christ has done in your life.
3. Will you decide today to be that bridge for somebody else to come to Jesus?

Helping Others Build Bridges to Reach the World

Introduction:

1. We learned that there is a huge gap that exists between mankind and God - it is the gap of sin. Jesus came to bridge that gap through His death on the cross.
2. Last week we learned that God wants to use you to be somebody's bridge to bring him or her to Jesus - your family, friends, and associates.
3. But did you know that if every believer on this planet won everyone in his sphere of influence, there would still be huge gaps? There would still be millions who have never heard about Jesus. There are still gaps all over this world that need a bridge.
 - 1.8 billion people have never been confronted with the good news of Jesus Christ.
 - Organized Christianity has no contact with 500 million people in the world today.
 - There are 11, 643 known people groups and 3,414 are currently unreached with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
4. We have a lot of bridge building to do! This is where we must understand the concept of missions. There are gaps that need a bridge. While you can't possibly reach the 1.8 billion people that have never heard of Jesus, you can help other people build bridges to reach those people.
5. Next week we will have four men and their families standing before us, wanting to build bridges to Wales, Ireland, Ivory Coast, and Arctic Siberia. They need our help. They need us to join hands with them.
6. If our lives are to have true meaning and impact, we must be involved in worldwide bridge building by helping others to build bridges. How can we accomplish this?

First, by understanding the heart of Jesus Christ

1. Our Savior has a heart of compassion - **Matthew 9:36-38**
 - "*Labourers*" would equal the name "missionary." A missionary goes out with hearts of compassion to reach for people for Christ.
2. Our Savior has a heart of grace - **Luke 19:1-10**
3. Our Savior has a heart for all people - **Acts 26:16-18**
 - Christ raised up Paul because He doesn't want anybody excluded.
1 Timothy 2:4, 6, 4:10; 2 Peter 3:9
4. This is Christ's heart, His mission, His vision, and He is calling **you** to be a part of it. Will you join hands with the Savior and accomplish **His** heart's desire?
5. Our existence on this earth is not simply about **us**, and our desires, and our thirst for more material things that will leave you ultimately empty. God's plan for your life is so much more meaningful than this.
6. It is about Jesus Christ and His desire for people to be saved and brought into a right relationship with God through His cross work. You can have a part in this.
7. Jesus is the supreme bridgebuilder and He is looking for people who will help build spiritual bridges in this world.

Second, by leaving your comfort zone

1. I said earlier that God raised up Paul because God's plan was that through Paul all nations might hear of the marvelous work that Christ did on the cross for sin.
 - Paul would later say, *"I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office."*
Romans 11:13
2. But here was the problem. The truth of Jesus Christ and His resurrection had never left the boundary of the Jewish community. The twelve apostles had confined their ministry to Israel because they were seeking to convert Israel first, and then through Israel's conversion, the message would eventually go to the other nations.
3. But God had other plans that the twelve didn't know about. God would reveal to Paul special revelation about the cross of Christ and that Christ had made an offering for **all people** on the cross. God would send salvation to all nations **despite** Israel's rebellion.
4. But in order for Paul's ministry to be accepted by the church, God would first send Peter to the house of a Gentile named Cornelius (a good, moral, religious man, but lost). He needed a Savior. **Acts 10:2**
 - To enter into a Gentile's house was not something that would be acceptable or comfortable for Peter. It was against Jewish law and custom.
5. God had to prod Peter out of his comfort zone and eventually Peter did go, and Cornelius and his entire household believed Peter's message about Jesus Christ and were saved.
 - Why is this? Because one man left his comfort zone and went and built a bridge to these people.
6. Did you know that there are Corneliuses all over this world? They just need a bridge.
7. Maybe God wants you to go and be a bridgebuilder somewhere. Maybe God wants you to be more involved in helping others build these bridges through your financial help.
8. Why has God blessed us so much in America, beyond our real need? It is not simply to raise our standard of **living**, but our standard of **giving**.
9. I challenge you to leave your comfort zone and get involved helping to build bridges.

Third, by laying aside all prejudice

1. The dictionary defines "prejudice" as "an attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, or race."
2. This is how the Jews felt about the Samaritans in Bible days. Samaria was located in northern Israel and many of the Jews had married Gentiles. The Jews had racial hatred towards the Samaritans.
3. But Jesus loved the Samaritans. He had reached out to a woman of Samaria during His earthly ministry and also instructed the twelve to eventually do the same.
Acts 1:8
4. As of Acts 8, the message of Christ had not gone to Samaria. Persecution began to hit the church at Jerusalem hard in **Acts 8:1**, but notice the result. vs. 4-5
 - Philip laid aside all prejudice and became a bridge to the Samaritan people.

5. We serve a God who is not prejudiced in any way. He doesn't love Americans more than another people group. He doesn't love one skin color more than another. He equally loves every person in the world and desires for every one to live with Him eternally.
6. If you have a problem with a person because of his skin color, or nationality, or financial status, etc., you have a serious heart infection.
 - Until it is cleared up, you will never be a bridge builder. In fact, you will be a barrier to people coming to Jesus.
7. Did you know that there are people groups right here in Daytona Beach that need to be reached? They need someone who will put aside all prejudice and build a bridge.

In Conclusion:

1. Do you desire for your life to have real meaning and impact? Get involved in worldwide bridge building by helping others to build bridges around the world.
2. Next Sunday we will begin our 15th annual Missions Conference that will focus on this issue of stretching ourselves to reach out to the world with the gospel of Christ.
 - Pray.
 - Be faithful to the services of the conference.
 - Ask God to speak to your heart through His Word and show you how you can get more involved.
3. Your life can make a difference in so many other people's lives.