

We are called to be bridge builders

Text: 1 Cor. 16:14



Hi everybody,

Since the first moment that humans looked across to the other side of a stretch of water or land, we have been somehow fascinated with bridges and their *power to bring people together*. For this very reason I have always had a deep fascination with bridges. For instance did you know that *The Brooklyn Bridge* in New York was the first bridge of its kind to be supported by steel cables. It was completed already in 1883 and was

over 500 meters long.

Another famous bridge is *The Tower Bridge* in London which was completed in 1894 and it was 270 meters long from shore to shore. It even had a high level pathway far above the drawbridge for pedestrians to cross over. In fact the hydraulic power lift of the bridge was new technology for its time that used pressurized water stored in six 100-ton accumulators. This was a combination of hydraulic power and the bascules (also known as drawbridges).

One of my absolute favorite bridges is the *Sydney Harbour Bridge*. I am particularly fascinated by the construction technology developed for building the *Sydney Harbour Bridge* (see image above). The bridge was completed in 1932 and is about 550 meters long and is the widest long-span bridge in the world. I even had the privilege of walking across the high arch when we visited Sydney during a church planting exchange in 2001. Another bridge worth mentioning is the *The Golden Gate Bridge* which not only had to span a long distance but had to overcome some extremely challenging circumstances like bad weather, earthquakes, and turbulent water all needed to be considered in the design.

I hope you see the connection with the church and the need to be bridge builders – a means to bring people together and overcome extremely challenging circumstances. You see, over the years I have found that sometimes when we as Christians share the gospel, I think we can unnecessarily offend or insult the very people we are trying to reach. But that is not necessary if we are only willing to follow the example of Jesus.

You see when Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman recorded in John 4, He didn't initially confront her about her bad life and her immorality. Instead, Jesus appealed to her inner thirst and longing for something better. He ultimately confronted her with her sin, and there is a place for that. But first **He built a bridge and established a dialogue with her.**

I believe the apostle Paul understood this very important principle as well. When he was brought before Herod Agrippa in Acts chapter 26 Paul found something in common and built a bridge to his listener. What we need to understand is that Paul was not trying to flatter Agrippa. In fact He was really telling the truth. Agrippa was well versed in the ways of the Jews. He knew all about Jewish culture and customs. He even knew the teachings of the Jewish prophets.

But Agrippa was also an immoral man. In fact rumor was circulating that he was involved in an incestuous relationship with his sister. Paul could have brought this up. He could have rubbed his bad life and character in his face and reminded Agrippa that he was a sinner and that everyone was speaking about his relationship with his sister. But he didn't do that. Instead he built a bridge. He was respectful.

The point is we should always strive to build bridges to the unchurched, to treat them with respect. So when possible, instead of offend someone find something in common and build a bridge to your listener as you are sharing the gospel. This will not only open up other opportunities to get closer but is a good start in sharing the gospel biblically, understandably, lovingly, and compassionately. So ***let all that you do be done with love*** – Be a bridge builder this week!

God bless

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