

## Building Bridges of Love

**“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”**

**Matthew 9:37-38**

Fulfilling the Great Commission has never been easy. As Christ’s ambassadors, we are commanded to “*go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*” (Matthew 28:19).

We believe the Good Shepherd can rescue anyone—yet we wrestle with questions of discernment:

Who has been given over to a reprobate mind? (Romans 1:28)

Who has been chosen by God for redemption? (Ephesians 1:4–5)

Still, we press on, “*giving reason for the hope we have in Christ*” (1 Peter 3:15), trusting that *our labor in the Lord will never be in vain* (1 Corinthians 15:58). We pray that our feet might be called “beautiful” (Romans 10:15) as we bring the gospel to those who do not yet know that *while we were still enemies, Christ died for us* (John 3:16).

As we look upon the vastness and complexity of our world, it’s easy to feel intimidated by the task before us. Many resist giving their hearts to Jesus—some on intellectual grounds, others for emotional reasons, still others for moral or cultural ones. They avoid the Light because it exposes their sin (John 3:19). *The god of this age has blinded their minds* (2 Corinthians 4:4), dulling spiritual hunger and stirring fear of what others might think.

And yet, despite the challenges, we continue the mission—planting and watering seeds in hope that some may come to know Jesus as Lord.

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### Big Idea

**We build bridges of love by listening like Philip, repenting like Peter, pausing like Paul, and believing like Barnabas.**

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### Listen Before You Speak

*(Acts 8:26–40)*

Before we can reach hearts, we must first take time to understand them—and no story illustrates this better than Philip’s encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch.

An angel of the Lord directed Philip to travel along the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza. There he met an Ethiopian eunuch, a high-ranking official serving the queen of Ethiopia, returning home after worshiping in Jerusalem. As he rode in his chariot, reading from Isaiah, the Holy Spirit prompted Philip to approach. When the eunuch admitted he didn't understand the passage, Philip joined him and explained that it spoke of Jesus Christ. The eunuch believed, asked to be baptized, and *went on his way rejoicing*.

From Philip we learn much about effective evangelism. The eunuch's achievements were great, but his heart was empty. He sought God but was turned away by religious exclusion (Deuteronomy 23:1).<sup>1</sup> Yet God saw his heart and sent Philip—not to argue, but to listen, understand, and share the gospel.

Philip looked beyond the man's past and obeyed the Spirit, showing us that **no one is beyond redemption**. When God sends us to witness, we are not *casting pearls before swine* (Matthew 7:6); we are extending grace to those He is already drawing to Himself. "*The Father of compassion and God of all comfort*" (2 Corinthians 1:3–4) calls us to pass that same comfort on. For "*there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1).

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### Practical Ways to Listen Well

1. **Listen with genuine curiosity**—not to argue, but to love.
2. **Listen for the heart beneath the words.** Pain, guilt, or fear often reveal where the gospel must heal.
3. **Listen with the Holy Spirit's help.** Ask Him to show what lies beneath the surface.
4. **Listen without judgment.** Create safe space for honesty. *Christ did not come to condemn but to save* (John 3:17).
5. **Listen for gospel bridges.** Look for moments where grace meets need.

*"I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some."* (1 Corinthians 9:22)

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### Refrain:

**Bridge builders listen, repent, pause, and believe the best.**

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<sup>1</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, "[The Acts of the Apostles](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: John and Acts*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 361–362.

## Look Within Before You Go

(Acts 10:1–48)

Before we can effectively reach others, we must let the Holy Spirit confront our own assumptions and prepare our hearts to love as Christ loves.

In Acts 10, a devout Roman centurion named Cornelius—generous and prayerful—received a vision instructing him to send for Peter. Meanwhile, Peter, praying on a rooftop, saw a sheet filled with animals and heard a voice: “*Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.*” (Acts 10:13). Then God declared, “*Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.*”

When Cornelius’s messengers arrived, the Spirit told Peter to go. At Cornelius’s home, Peter preached Christ’s death and resurrection, and while he spoke, the Holy Spirit fell on all who listened. The wall between Jew and Gentile crumbled.

Peter had learned that salvation was for all—but still, God needed to clear his heart of prejudice. He gave Peter a vision three times, matching the three denials and restorations, until Peter fully surrendered to God’s inclusive grace.

When we hesitate to open our hearts to those different from us, it reveals an incomplete view of God’s kingdom. His grace is not confined by race, culture, or status. Every person is made in God’s image (Genesis 1:27). Salvation is by grace through faith, not works (Ephesians 2:8–9).

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### Practical Ways to Remove Inner Barriers

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal blind spots.
2. Pray for those who frustrate or oppose you. Prayer softens prejudice.
3. Seek understanding before forming opinions.
4. Filter every judgment through the cross.
5. Stay anchored in Scripture (Romans 12:2).

When we yield to the Spirit’s work, bias gives way to compassion, and love becomes a reflection of Christ, who “*broke down every dividing wall*” (Ephesians 2:14).

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## Pause Before You Push Back

*(Galatians 2:11–21)*

Once our hearts are humble and free from bias, we must learn to live with **grace under pressure**—pausing before we push back.

Paul recounts confronting Peter in Antioch. Peter, once comfortable with Gentiles, withdrew when strict Jewish believers arrived. Fear led to hypocrisy, and even Barnabas followed his example. Paul rebuked Peter, reminding him that *no one is justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ*.

Even the most faithful can fall back into old habits of fear and pride. Social pressure can distort gospel truth. When we face legalism today—inside or outside the church—we must remember: *“There is no one righteous, not even one”* (Romans 3:10–11).

No one earns salvation through performance. The gospel declares **welcome before transformation**, because Christ performed perfectly in our place. *“It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves”* (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Before we speak of grace, we must confess any spiritual pride. Salvation is by Christ’s blood alone, and obedience is not the ticket into God’s kingdom—it’s the evidence of a life changed by grace.

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## Open Hands, Open Hearts

*(Acts 9:26–28)*

Grace not only humbles us—it opens our hearts to see the potential in others through Christ’s eyes.

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem after his conversion, the disciples were afraid, doubting his sincerity. But Barnabas—the *“son of encouragement”*—stood beside him, introduced him to the apostles, and testified of Saul’s transformation. Because of Barnabas, Saul was received, discipled, and released into ministry.

This story reminds us how vital it is to be **encouragers**. Three years after his conversion, many still doubted Paul. Yet Barnabas bridged the gap.

We too are **coworkers in God’s kingdom** (1 Corinthians 3:9), called not to compete but to build one another up. Encourage those who labor for the gospel. The more fruitful their ministry, the more fiercely the enemy attacks. Instead of jealousy, celebrate God’s work through them. Unity in the body fuels the witness of the Church.

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## Practical Ways to Encourage Fellow Believers

1. Pray for them—both in struggle and success.
2. Speak words of life and affirmation.
3. Share their burdens when they are weary.
4. Defend them when they face criticism.
5. Celebrate their victories with joy, not comparison.
6. Spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24).

When we strengthen the bridges among believers, we strengthen the witness of Christ to the world.

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## The Gospel Invitation

Here's the good news: **Jesus died for our sins, rose again, and offers forgiveness and new life to all who turn from sin and trust Him.** We are saved by grace through faith—not by works. *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* (Romans 10:13)

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## Conclusion

The call to build bridges of love is not for the faint of heart—it is a call to Spirit-filled living. The harvest is still plentiful, and the workers are still few (Matthew 9:37–38). Yet God still sends ordinary believers—like Philip, Peter, Paul, and Barnabas—to carry His extraordinary message of grace into a hurting world.

To build these bridges, we must:

- **Listen before we speak** – with compassion like Philip.
- **Look within before we go** – with humility like Peter.
- **Pause before we push back** – with grace like Paul.
- **Open our hands and hearts** – with encouragement like Barnabas.

This is how the gospel advances—through people who love deeply, listen humbly, and live boldly. When we build bridges of unity within the body, the world takes notice. Jesus said, *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* (John 13:35)

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So let us go, as ambassadors of Christ, into the harvest fields of our families, workplaces, and communities. Let us love without fear, serve without prejudice, and share the gospel without shame. And as we build bridges of love—one heart, one conversation, one act of grace at a time—may the Lord of the harvest be glorified, and may many come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and King.

**The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.  
Will you be one the Lord sends today?**