

Study Guide: Building Bridges - Parkside Church 5th Anniversary

Summary & Key Themes

This anniversary message celebrates Parkside Church's five-year journey while reaffirming their core mission of building bridges between people and Jesus. The message traces the church's evolution from intimate Sunday night gatherings on Mallard Street to a community that has weathered challenges (including a stolen trailer) while maintaining unwavering commitment to their foundational values.

The teaching centers on the theological foundation of bridge building through Paul's words in Ephesians 2:19-20, where formerly excluded Gentiles are welcomed as "fellow citizens with God's people." This passage illustrates God's heart for inclusion and provides the biblical framework for Parkside's mission. The speaker emphasizes that "building bridges" is not merely a slogan but represents the church's north star, orienting them toward Jesus' Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.

The message concludes with 2 Corinthians 5:17-19, highlighting that as reconciled people, believers are given the ministry of reconciliation. A bridge serves as a tool of reconciliation, closing gaps between separated parties. The call is clear: having been reconciled to God through Christ, believers are equipped and commissioned to become bridge builders themselves.

Discussion Questions

1. The pastor mentions that after five years, their core mission "is still true." What does it mean for a church to maintain consistency in mission while adapting to change? How do you see this balance in your own spiritual journey?
2. Paul writes to Gentile believers who "felt shut out and isolated" and were "considered outsiders by Jews." Who might feel like outsiders in our current context? How can we actively build bridges to include them?
3. The speaker emphasizes wanting to be "known for what we are for" rather than what they're against. How does this positive framing change the way we approach evangelism and community engagement?
4. Reflecting on 2 Corinthians 5:17-19, what does it mean that "you have been given the ministry of reconciliation"? How does this personal calling connect to the church's larger mission?

Practical Next Steps

1. Identify Your Bridges

- Reflect on relationships where you could serve as a bridge between someone and Jesus
- Consider people in your spheres of influence who might feel like "outsiders"
- Ask God to show you specific ways to demonstrate His inclusive love

2. Live Out the Seven Values

- Choose one of Parkside's seven values (Jesus as identity, people as priority, Scripture as truth, worship as passion, community as design, serving as privilege, discipleship as mission)
- Create a specific plan for how you'll embody this value in the coming week
- Share your plan with someone for accountability

3. Build Community Connections

- Look for opportunities to help others find "hope and healing no matter their story"
- Join or initiate efforts that bring isolated people into community
- Practice the "springboard for daily action" by intentionally living and loving like Jesus

Digging Deeper: Scripture Study

1. Ephesians 2:11-22

- Study the full context of Paul's message about inclusion and unity
- Examine how Jesus "broke down the wall of hostility" between groups
- Consider modern applications of this ancient division between Jews and Gentiles

2. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

- Explore what it means to be a "new creation" in Christ
- Reflect on the progression from being reconciled to becoming reconcilers
- Study the phrase "not counting people's sins against them" and its implications for how we treat others

3. Matthew 28:18-20 (The Great Commission)

- Connect Jesus' commission to "make disciples of all nations" with the bridge-building metaphor
- Consider how baptism and teaching fit into the ministry of reconciliation
- Examine what it means to make disciples across cultural and social boundaries

4. Ephesians 4:23-24

- Study the context of this verse referenced in Parkside's vision
- Explore what it means to "be made new in the attitude of your minds"

- Reflect on how this renewal connects to becoming effective bridge builders

Remember: The goal isn't just to celebrate past faithfulness but to embrace the ongoing call to build bridges. As the message concludes, "God is just getting things started with Parkside Church" - and with each of us as individual bridge builders who live and love like Jesus.