

## Bridge to Life Sermon

So this is Laity Sunday. I think it is just a good excuse to give the pastors the Sunday off. Actually, it is a great reminder that sharing Christ and doing the Lord's work is not just their job, it is everyone's job. We all need to be open and ready to share the love of Jesus.

I want to take a moment and thank our pastors, Pastor Chuck and Pastor Darby for their service. We are blessed to have solid, Bible teaching leaders. Thank you!

Today I am going to share with you how I came to know Jesus and give you a tool you can use to share with others.

I grew up in this Church, knowing about God and the Bible. I learned from great Sunday school teachers and I want to thank them. I want to thank them and all the individuals that have touched and shaped my life. You know that every interaction we have with someone can have a lasting effect on that person.

I am definitely a product of Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." My parents have been awesome examples of living a godly life and have worked hard because I was not always so willing to obey. They need to be thanked for not giving up on me!

I had most embarrassing moment in this church. I fell down these very steps as an acolyte. That was a very humbling moment as the entire church gasped at my trip.

I struggled as a student, felt alone, and that I was missing something. Every challenge that came before me was an object of great drama and everything centered on me. Isn't that how we all can see ourselves at times? I had no peace, no understanding of the messages I was hearing, and I felt alone.

When I was about 14 years old, I went to camp. Camp is a great place to learn, explore, and get out of the normal routines of life. Parents, it is so worth the investment of sending your children to Church camp.

At this camp, we were shown the Bridge to Life that really helped me to understand where I was at and what I needed to do. It is a simple illustration that connected everything for me. It helped me to understand how to live my life to its fullest.

You have the start of the picture. The Bible says that God created us in His own image to be His friend and to experience a full life assured of His love, abundant and eternal. In Gen 1:27, it says, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him..." Jesus said, "...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." That is John 10:10b. In Romans 5:1, it says, "...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Since God planned for us to have peace and abundant life right now, why are most of us, not having this experience?

God created us in His own image to have an abundant, meaningful life. He did not make us robots to automatically love and obey Him, but He gave us a will and a freedom of choice.

Mankind chose to disobey God and go our own willful way. We still make this choice today. This results in separation from God. I chose to make me the center of my world so when I wanted to talk to God He seemed very far away.

See where Man is written – that stands for all of us and we have problems. Under it we need to write: Sin --"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." That is in Romans 3:23. All of us! Well my sin isn't as big as that person's sin. I have not murdered anyone; I have not committed a crime. Well, maybe I did cheat on that answer, but I studied. Well, maybe I lied but just a little. That's alright isn't it, a little white lie? The TV says that's okay.

The next thing we have to write is Death – In Romans 6:23, we find, "For the wages of sin is death..." Sin is Sin. Big or little, it all counts the same. And we also have Judgment – We find in Hebrews 9:27, "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment..." Yikes! Doesn't look too good on this side, does it? Isaiah 59:2 says, "...your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear." On our own, there's no way we can attain the perfection needed to bridge the gap to God. Through the ages, individuals have tried many ways...without success. Our society is trying Good works, but that won't do it...or religion...or money... or philosophy... It says in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."

So what is the Remedy? How can this gap be fixed? Jesus Christ is the only answer to this problem. He died on the cross and rose from the grave, paying the penalty for our sin and bridging the gap between God and people.

"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God..." That is from 1 Peter 3:18. In 1 Timothy 2:5 we find, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ." Why did Jesus have to die? In Romans 5:8 it says, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

So what do we have to do? What is our response to all of this? Believe! Believing means trust and commitment - acknowledging our sinfulness, trusting Christ's forgiveness and letting Him control our life. Believing! Believing that eternal and abundant life is a gift for us to receive. I was taught this verse, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." Now I had a better understanding of what it meant. In John 5:24, "I tell you the truth; whoever **hears** my word and **believes** Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

Wow. I had a choice to make. At Camp we were told to go out in God's beautiful nature, find a quiet spot and reflect on what we had just heard. It was a beautiful night with a full moon. Two Airplanes were traveling on similar courses. Both were headed toward the moon. The first one, at the last second turned and missed crossing in front of the moon. The second one crossed right in front.

So on Flag Day, June 14<sup>th</sup>, I finally understood that I had to make a choice. It was not up to my parents, church, Sunday school teachers, or friends how I would relate to Jesus. That day I asked Jesus to help me to take Me out of the center of my life and replace it with Him!

We have great assurances that the Bible says in Romans 10:13, "...for, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." That was from Ephesians 2:8-9. And in 1 John 5:12-13, "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

Receiving Christ, we are born into God's family through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer...this is called regeneration or the "new birth." I crossed that bridge and now I will never be alone or have a fear of death.

So I came home and started to deepen my relationship in my new life with Christ. I started to talk to God in prayer every day. I told others about my new faith in Christ. Worshiping, having fellowship and serving with other Christians in a church where Christ is preached was very important to me. Also, maintaining regular intake of the Bible to know Christ better, going to Sunday school or a Bible study and having a daily devotional were a new priority.

*So now I ask you, is there any reason why you shouldn't cross over that bridge to God's side and be certain of eternal life?* It is your choice. You do not need to be at camp, or young, or have a wowing story. All we need to do is:

1. Admit our need (I am a sinner).
2. Be willing to turn from our sins (repent).
3. Believe that Jesus Christ died for us on the cross and rose from the grave.

Through prayer, invite Jesus Christ to come in and control your life through the Holy Spirit Receive Him as Lord and Savior of your life.

Or may-be you have already given your life to Christ, rededicate your life and renew that commitment. Let Jesus be your peace that passes all understanding. We do not need to know the answers to all of life's questions. We need to believe.

If you are willing to do that, pray this prayer with me. Repeat after me:

*Dear Lord Jesus,*

*I know that I am a sinner/ I need Your forgiveness. /I believe that You died for my sins. /I want to turn from my sins. /I now invite you to come into my heart and life. /I want to trust you. I want to follow You. Be Lord and Savior of my life.*

*In Your name. Amen.*

As Christ's representatives in a needy world, demonstrate your new life by your love and concern for others. Follow the Great Commission and share this bridge to life. For we know it is the job of all of us, not just the pastors to share the Awesome News of Jesus!  
May you be a blessing for you are blessed!

Let us pray.

Lord, thank you for this time of sharing; for your message of hope in our broken world. Thank you for giving us your Son to bridge the gap of sin. Lord, as we go out of these doors today, help us. Lord, help us to find the needs of others and fill it with Your love. Help us to be strong and bold for you. Help us to get involved in learning more about you through Sunday school and Bible Study. Lord, to you be the Glory. Amen.