

THE
Bridge
COURSE

TRAINING

WHAT IS THE BRIDGE COURSE?

Bridge is a way for non-Christians to explore the Christian faith in a relaxed, non-threatening environment over ten weeks. Each week begins with an informal meal or dessert, followed by a talk that is designed to raise important questions and inspire conversation. Those conversations take place during the discussion time and are characterized by open questions and an environment where guests can explore what they believe without pressure. Everything we do is with our guests in mind. We try to create the most warm and welcoming environment as possible.

WHAT ARE THE TALKS?

WEEK 1 – How Good Are You?

WEEK 2 – Why Doesn't God Just Forgive Everyone?

WEEK 3 – How Can God Allow Suffering?

WEEK 4 – How Could God Send People to Hell?

WEEK 5 – Can We Really Trust the Bible?

WEEK 6 – Is Jesus Really the Only Way?

WEEK 7 – Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

RETREAT 1 – What Will Really Satisfy?

RETREAT 2 – Why Do We Need the Holy Spirit?

RETREAT 3 – What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

RETREAT 4 – Will I Make it to Heaven?

WEEK 8 – Why Do We Matter?

WEEK 9 – Is Christianity Really Worth It?

WEEK 10 – Where Do We Go From Here?

CELEBRATION DINNER: Who Really Needs God?

WHAT MAKES FOR A SUCCESSFUL COURSE?

- Prayer.
- “When we depend upon organizations, we get what organizations can do; when we depend upon education, we get what education can do; when we depend upon man, we get what man can do; but when we depend upon prayer, we get what God can do.” (A.C DIXON)
- Evangelism and outreach.
- Following the guidelines.
- Befriending the guests during the course.
- Connecting with guests outside of Bridge.

WHAT IS A TYPICAL SCHEDULE?

5:30 – Prayer with leaders and assistant leaders

6:30 – Dinner or dessert

7:00 – Video

7:35 – Break

7:45 – Discussion Groups

8:15 – End

HOW DO THE DISCUSSIONS GROUPS WORK?

- Each group should have a leader, co-leader and two assistant leaders.
- Be sure to introduce yourself and co-leaders.
- Do the ice breaker on week one which is the name game.
- Go over the ground rules for discussion.
 - ✓ Show mutual respect.
 - ✓ There’s no such thing as a dumb question.
 - ✓ No one has to talk.
 - ✓ Only one person will talk at a time.
 - ✓ Please don’t dominate the discussion.

- Encourage Discussion:

Let guests know that it won't be a successful group without their thoughts and input. There is no pressure to participate and no question is too dumb. We want them to share what's on their minds. The goal of this time is for the guests to talk, not the leaders or assistant leaders. As a leader, your goal is to facilitate discussion by inviting participation, listening well and drawing out thoughts and opinions. Please don't dominate the group or begin answering all their questions. Stick to the questions found in the manual under "Discussion Starters". Even though we know there are right and wrong answers, we don't want to correct people who are saying things that might be unbiblical. We want to affirm people when they participate by thanking them for sharing or mentioning that what they shared was interesting. It's important that we love people by listening, understanding, and respecting them. But we also don't want to leave people with the idea that all answers are correct. As a group leader, you have to let a lot of stuff go. There are many tangents. Be sure to end the discussion on time.

- So what do you do if people are not coming up with a sound answer?

First, try to allow everyone to weigh in if possible. Use the question, "What do others think?" a lot. If the group is still producing unbiblical answers, bounce their thoughts off the talk. Say something like, "Jim mentioned that none of us can get to God by our good works. How do you reconcile that with what you are saying?" If that still doesn't work, then draw your assistant leaders into the mix. Don't call on them by name because guests may fear that you will call on them next. When the assistant leader brings out a true answer, you can move onto the next question.

- What if no one is answering?

You have to be comfortable with silence. Wait for people to work up the courage to answer. Don't jump in and fill the silence too soon. If people aren't answering, you could say something like, "I know it's a difficult question or it can be hard to go first, but take your time." Then just restate the question and be patient. If it's not working, move on to the next question. Assistant leaders can answer to jumpstart the discussion if no one is answering.

WHAT HAPPENS ON THE RETREAT?

- The importance of the retreat cannot be overstated.
- The retreat is best scheduled after week 7 or 8.
- It usually takes place on a Friday night and ends on Saturday afternoon.
- The retreat provides a unique opportunity for guests to respond to the gospel and encounter God through prayer and ministry.
- It also provides a wonderful opportunity to connect relationally.

WHAT HAPPENS ON THE RETREAT?

FRIDAY NIGHT

6:30 – Dinner

7:30 – Announcements and singing

7:40 – **What Will Really Satisfy?**

8:15 – Discussion

8:45 – Free Time

SATURDAY

8:30 – Breakfast

9:00 – **Why Do We Need the Holy Spirit?**

9:45 – Discussion

10:15 – Coffee break

10:30 – **What Does the Holy Spirit Do?**

11:15 – Worship and prayer time

12:00 – Lunch and free time

2:00 – **Will I Make it to Heaven?**

2:30 – Discussion

3:00 – Singing and testimonies

3:30 – Group picture and end

WHAT IS THE CELEBRATION DINNER?

- At the end of the course, we have a Celebration Dinner which is a great opportunity for the guests who've just completed the course to invite friends, family, neighbors, classmates, and co-workers to learn more about Bridge.
- The Celebration Dinner is usually a little nicer than the regular weekly Bridge meetings.
- After dinner we ask 1 or 2 guests that have recently taken the course to share their story.
- After the testimonies, you can show the video "Who Really Needs God?" and close the time by encouraging the guests to sign up for the next course.
- There is no discussion at the Celebration Dinner.
- We are simply trying to inspire the new guests to attend the upcoming course.

WHAT IS THE BEST YEARLY SCHEDULE?

- We've found that it works best to do the course 3 times a year. It works well to run the Bridge in the fall, winter, and spring. You can start the fall course in the middle of September and end the week before Thanksgiving or the week after. Because of the busyness of the holidays, we schedule our Celebration Dinner for the first week of January. This allows us as a church to use our Christmas Services to invite visitors to join us for the Celebration Dinner where they can learn more about the Bridge course.
- The winter course then starts the 2nd or 3rd week of January and finishes up before Easter. We schedule our Celebration Dinner the week immediately after Easter. This allows us as a church to use our Easter Events to invite visitors to join us for the Celebration Dinner.
- The spring course starts right after Easter and finishes before the end of June. We schedule the Celebration Dinner right away so that it falls before July if possible. This enables the course to build significant momentum from one session to the next.
- The online talks do make it easy to adjust the schedule if you are running the course in a home, at school, in a facility, at work, with a few friends, or even one-on-one.

BRIDGE STUDY

- When the Bridge Course ends, we encourage each Bridge group to do their own Bridge Study. It's a four-week Bible study with the option of extending it to 6 weeks. It's designed to help guests grow in understanding the importance of the church, the gospel, the Bible and prayer. These are things that are essential to survive and thrive in the Christian life.
- We encourage the leaders to be flexible in where and when they do the Bridge Study. It's often best to meet in a home, but you can leave it up to the group. During the Bridge Course we are facilitating a very open discussion, but in the Bridge Study, we are free to be a little more direct and to seek to disciple folks and to model for them what small groups and biblical fellowship looks like.

TIPS FOR LEADERS:

- Pray for your guests.
- Spend time looking at the leaders manual and circle 3 or 4 questions you hope to get to.
- Just stick to the discussion starters.
- Don't try to turn it into a Bible study or re-write the questions.
- Ask God to help you to love the guests with the love of Christ.
- Make sure people are comfortable.
- Look for ways to serve them.
- Don't do all the talking.
- Ask simple questions (What do you think? How do you feel?).
- Treat everyone with respect and interest.
- Be sure to give encouragement when someone shares something.
- Keep the focus on the gospel not on morality.
- Consider using the "How Good Are You?" booklet outside of the discussion times to help explain the gospel.

TIPS FOR ASSISTANT LEADERS:

- Pray for your guests.
- Focus on building relationships with the guests during the meeting.
- Look for times to connect with guests outside of Bridge.
- Don't answer any questions unless the leader looks to you.
- And when you do answer a question, don't give your answer to the group, answer the leader relating what you've found in your own life.
- You will probably have to lead at some point if the leader is sick or can't make it, so be prepared for this.
- It's best to have the assistant leaders take over if the leaders can't make it since they are already part of the group and have made connections with the guests.
- Provide feedback to the leaders on how to improve discussion.

INTRODUCTION

ON

Thanks for joining us. I think you're really going to enjoy the Bridge Course. We've designed the Bridge Course to be a relaxed, fun way to explore the Christian faith. Over the next 10 weeks we're going to explore questions that many people wrestle with: How can God allow suffering? Why do we matter? How good are you? Will I make it to heaven? What will really satisfy? Can we really trust the Bible? One thing that makes the Bridge so engaging is the open discussion, where no question is too simple or too hostile and doubts are welcome. It's a great place to explore spiritual issues in a non-threatening environment.

Maybe you're coming to the Bridge and you really don't feel like you need help or change—you're happy with where you are in life. Maybe things are falling apart and you're desperate for help and some answers. Maybe you just came out to appease a friend. Whatever the reason, I'd encourage you to approach the course with an open heart and an open mind. I always tell people up front, just test drive the course for the first 3 weeks. If you don't like it after that, then don't come anymore. We'll never pressure you. You'll never be cornered or called on. Our goal is to create a safe and friendly environment where you can explore the bigger questions of life at your own pace. So grab some dinner, get some coffee and dessert, relax, and enjoy your journey at the Bridge.

— JIM DONOHUE

INFORMATIC

ION

SCHEDULE

6:30 – Dinner or dessert

7:00 – Video

7:35 – Break

7:45 – Discussion Groups

8:15 – End

TALKS

WEEK 1 – How Good Are You?

WEEK 2 – Why Doesn't God Just Forgive Everyone?

WEEK 3 – How Can God Allow Suffering?

WEEK 4 – How Could God Send People to Hell?

WEEK 5 – Can We Really Trust the Bible?

WEEK 6 – Is Jesus Really the Only Way?

WEEK 7 – Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

RETREAT 1 – What Will Really Satisfy?

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WEEK 10 – Where Do We Go From Here?

CELEBRATION DINNER: Who Really Needs God?

WEEK I

How Good Are You?

ROMANS 3:19-25

1. How do we know what “good” is?

2. How good do you have to be?

- Not by Works (Romans 3:19-20).
 1. You shall have no other gods before me.
 2. You shall not make for yourself an idol.
 3. You shall not take God’s name in vain.
 4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
 5. Honor your father and mother.
 6. You shall not murder.
 7. You shall not commit adultery.
 8. You shall not steal.
 9. You shall not lie.
 10. You shall not covet.

“But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.”

(Matthew 12:36)

“Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.” (1 John 3:15)

“For whoever keeps the whole law and stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” (James 2:10)

“No one is good - not even one...For all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious standard.” (Romans 3:10, 23 NLT)

- But by Grace. (Romans 3:21-25)
- Good people don’t go to heaven. Forgiven people do.

Announcements

- Make sure everyone has a Bridge Manual, "How Good Are You?" booklet, and an ESV Bible.
- Be sure to introduce yourself and co-leaders.
- Review the ground rules for discussion:
 - ✓ Show mutual respect (no put downs).
 - ✓ There is no such thing as a dumb question.
 - ✓ No one has to talk.
 - ✓ Only one person will talk at a time.
 - ✓ Please don't dominate conversation.
- Break the Ice
 - ✓ Start with the name game.
 - ✓ If you were stranded on a desert island what three things would you take with you?

Discussion Starters:

- What did you think of the talk?
- What do you think about the idea that it's impossible to get to God by being a good person?
- How did you feel when we went through the Ten Commandments?
- What do you think about Jesus dying to pay the penalty for your sins?
- How do you think you would feel if you encountered God?
- What do you think about the idea that good people don't go to heaven, forgiven people do?

Book Recommendation:

- How Good Is Good Enough? (ANDY STANLEY)

WEEK 2

Why Doesn't God Just Forgive Everyone?

GENESIS 3:1-13

Where does sin and evil come from?

1. Ignoring God's Word. (Genesis 3:1-3)

"And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world."
(Revelation 12:9)

2. Ignoring God's Goodness. (Genesis 3:4-5)

3. Ignoring God's Consequences.

- Shame. (Genesis 3:6-7)
- Separation. (Genesis 3:8-13)
- Sentence. (Genesis 3:14-19)

"For the life of a creature is in the blood." (Leviticus 17:11)

"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."
(Hebrews 9:22)

Why doesn't God just forgive everyone?

- It would be unjust for Him not to punish our sin.

Announcements

- Review the ground rules again if there are new guests.

Discussion Starters:

- How did the story of the king and his mom affect you?
- What do you think about there being consequences to sin?
- What things have made you question God's goodness?
- Have you ever felt like you're hiding or running from God?
- How do you feel about the idea that God doesn't run away from us when we sin?
- Do you think you understand Jesus dying on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins?

Book Recommendation:

- The Prodigal God (TIMOTHY KELLER)

WEEK 3

How Can God Allow Suffering?

I PETER 2:18-24

1. Is God judging me when I suffer? (1 Peter 2:19-20a)

- We suffer because we live in a sinful world.
- We suffer because others sin against us.
- We suffer because of our own sin.

“A man reaps what he sows.” (Galatians 6:7 NIV)

“A man’s own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord.”
(Proverbs 19:3)

2. Is God able to redeem my suffering?

- Suffering can bring us to God.
- Suffering can bring maturity.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1:2-4)

- Suffering can bring a longing for a better place.

3. Is God there when I suffer? (1 Peter 2:21-24)

- God suffers with us.
- God suffers for us.

Announcements

- Announce the date of the Bridge Retreat.

Discussion Starters:

- How do you feel about this message?
- In what ways have you experienced suffering because of the sin of others?
- What do you think about the idea that we sometimes suffer because of our own sin? Do you have an example from your own life?
- How has this talk changed or challenged your view of suffering?
- Can you see how God could use your suffering for good? Why or why not?
- What do you think about the idea that God's goal for us in our short time on earth is not just to make us happy but to prepare us for eternity?

Book Recommendation:

- Walking With God Through Pain and Suffering (TIMOTHY KELLER)

WEEK 4

How Could God Send People to Hell?

REVELATION 20:11-25

“You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong. You destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the LORD abhors.” (Psalm 5:4-6)

Some Common Objections to Hell:

1. I haven't really done anything that bad.

“Most of the time, our running away from God has not taken an active form - like being Adolf Hitler, or murder, or being the school bully. Rather, it mostly takes a passive form: gossip, greed, hypocrisy, racism, anger, deceit, lust, insensitivity, stubbornness, being uncooperative, manipulation, lies, pride, envy, and so on. The list is endless. Our sin might be sophisticated and respectable, but it makes us guilty just the same. Our lives are riddled with idolatry as we pursue the created things rather than the Creator himself, and this is an offence in the sight of God that is punishable by death and hell.”¹ (KIM HAWTREY)

2. The punishment is too great.

3. Jesus is about love, not hell.

Some Common Myths About Heaven: (RANDY ALCORN)

1. We'll be so different in heaven.

2. Heaven is just a state of mind.

“To our minds this present existence is solid and real, whereas our coming existence seems shadowy and insubstantial. Paul teaches us that the reverse is true. The life which is to come is strong, permanent and real; the present life is lived among the shadows.”² (RANDY ALCORN)

“Soon you will read in the newspaper that I am dead. Don’t believe it for a moment. I will be more alive than ever before.”³ (D.L. MOODY)

3. Heaven is boring.

“You can’t exhaust heaven – you can only go in deeper to discover more and more and delight more and more in what you discover. On earth, when we find what we’ve been looking for our delight often diminishes. In heaven it’s the opposite. Delight keeps increasing – no wonder, since unlike anything on earth, what’s in heaven is what we were actually looking for all along.”⁴ (RANDY ALCORN)

Announcements

- Announce the date of the Bridge Retreat and show a promotional video of the retreat at bridgecourse.org/resources.
- Encourage the guests to come to the retreat.

Discussion Starters:

- What did you think of the story called “the Room”?
- How do you feel about a book filled with everything you’ve ever done, thought or said?
- Do you think the punishment of hell is too extreme? Why or why not?
- What do you think about the idea that God’s wrath is not unjust?
- What do you think about the Bible’s teaching on heaven?
- Do you think you can know for certain that your name is written in the Book of Life? Why or why not?

Book Recommendation:

- In Light of Eternity (RANDY ALCORN)

WEEK 5

Can We Really Trust the Bible?

2 PETER 1:16-21

Seven Reasons We Can Trust the Bible:

1. The God Reason.

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."
(2 Timothy 3:16)

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished." (Matthew 5:17-18)

2. The Eyewitness Reason.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it." (1 John 1:1-2)

3. The History Reason.

"It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible."⁵ (NELSON GLUECK)

4. The Manuscript Reason.

"In the variety and fullness of the evidence on which it rests, the text of the New Testament stands absolutely and unapproachably alone among ancient prose writings."⁶ (F.J.A. HORT)

5. The Science Reason.

6. The Prophecy Reason.

7. The Personal Reason.

“The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

Make it personal.

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” (Matthew 7:24)

Announcements

- Show a testimony to promote the retreat at bridgecourse.org/resources.
- Take time to register guests for the retreat.

Discussion Starters:

- What did you think about the message?
- Which of the seven reasons for trusting the Bible did you find most helpful? Why?
- Have you read much of the Bible? What was your experience?
- Has something stopped you from opening the Bible in the past or even now?
- Do you think science and the Bible are friends or enemies?
- Do you think the Bible can change your life? In what ways?

Book Recommendation:

- ESV Study Bible
- Reliable Truth (RICHARD E. SIMMONS III)

WEEK 6

Is Jesus Really the Only Way?

JOHN 14:1-11

1. Jesus alone can bring us to the Father. (John 14:1-7)

“Most people in our culture believe that, if there is a God, we can relate to him and go to heaven through leading a good life. Let’s call this ‘the moral improvement’ view. Christianity teaches the very opposite. In the Christian understanding, Jesus does not tell us how to live so we can merit salvation. Rather, he comes to forgive and save us through his life and death in our place. God’s grace does not come to people who morally outperform others, but to those who admit their failure to perform and who acknowledge their need for a Savior.”⁷ (TIM KELLER)

2. Jesus alone is fully God and fully man. (John 14:8-11)

“If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ What shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:13)

“‘I and the Father are one.’ The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, ‘I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?’ The Jews answered him, ‘It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.’” (John 10:30-33)

How can we test Jesus’ claim that He is God?

- He was not God and He knew it (Liar).
- He was not God and He didn’t know it (Lunatic).
- He is God (Lord).

“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic, on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the Devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse... but let us

not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”⁸
(C.S. LEWIS)

“When you’ve eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.”⁹ (SHERLOCK HOLMES)

“We are faced then with a frightening alternative. The man we are talking about was (and is) just what he said or else a lunatic or something worse. Now it seems to me obvious that he was neither a lunatic nor a fiend; and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem. I have to accept the view that he was and is God. God has landed on this enemy occupied world in human form.”¹⁰
(C.S. LEWIS)

Announcements

- Show a testimony to promote the retreat at bridgecourse.org/resources.
- Take time to register guests for the retreat.

Discussion Starters:

- Did anyone try reading the Bible last week? How did it go?
- What do you think about Jesus being the only way to get to God?
- Do you struggle with Jesus’s claim to be the only way?
- What do you think about the cultural assumption that “all religions are basically the same”?
- How does the “Liar, Lunatic or Lord” argument affect what you think of Jesus?
- What do you think about Jesus being fully God and fully man?

Book Recommendation:

- Mere Christianity (C.S. LEWIS)

WEEK 7

Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

MARK 15:16-39

Why did Jesus have to die?

1. To Fulfill Scripture. (Psalm 22)

- "He was numbered with the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:12)
- "Wine mixed with myrrh (Proverbs 31) and wine mixed with vinegar." (Psalm 69:21)
- "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?" (Psalm 22:1)
- "All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!" (Psalm 22:7-8)
- "For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet - I can count all my bones - they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." (Psalm 22:16-18)

2. To Ransom Us. (Mark 15:33-34)

- "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)
- "God forsaking God, who can understand that?"¹ (MARTIN LUTHER)
- "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased." (Matthew 12:18)
- "For the Father loves the Son." (John 5:20)
- "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11)
- "And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." (John 8:29)
- "You loved me before the foundation of the world... I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:24-26)
- "But the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me." (John 14:31)

“Thirty-three years earlier there had been brightness and music at midnight when Jesus was born. Now there is darkness and silence at noontide as he dies.”¹² (R. KENT HUGHES)

- “God made Him who had no sin to become sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”
(2 Corinthians 5:21)

“Once he had done that, God the Father had to forsake all that sin. When Jesus was wearing our sin on the cross, God the Father could not bear to look at the sin or at his Son. He had to avert his gaze. He had to shield his eyes. He had to turn his back. He had to condemn and reject and curse and damn that sin.”¹³ (PHILLIP RYKEN)

3. To Bring Us Near. (Mark 15:37- 38)

Announcements

- Coordinate details about the retreat.
- Inform guests it isn't too late to participate in the retreat even if they can only make part of it.

Discussion Starters:

- What are your thoughts about this talk?
- Why do you think that the death of Jesus was different from other deaths?
- How does the death of Jesus by crucifixion make you feel?
- What do you think about Jesus being forsaken by God in our place?
- How do you feel about the concept of people needing to be rescued?
- Do you think you are near to God or far from him? Has that changed since the start of the Bridge Course?

Book Recommendation:

- 50 Reasons Jesus Came to Die (JOHN PIPER)

RETREAT

SCHEDULE

FRIDAY NIGHT

- 6:30** – Dinner
- 7:30** – Announcements and singing
- 7:40** – **What Will Really Satisfy?**
- 8:15** – Discussion
- 8:45** – Free Time

SATURDAY

- 8:30** – Breakfast
- 9:00** – **Why Do We Need the Holy Spirit?**
- 9:45** – Discussion
- 10:15** – Coffee break
- 10:30** – **What Does the Holy Spirit Do?**
- 11:15** – Worship and prayer time
- 12:00** – Lunch and free time
- 2:00** – **Will I Make it to Heaven?**
- 2:30** – Discussion
- 3:00** – Singing and testimonies
- 3:30** – Group picture and end

RETREAT TALK I

What Will Really Satisfy?

JEREMIAH 2:12-13

1. The Lord is the fountain of satisfaction. (Jeremiah 2:13a)

“Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing.”¹⁴ (C.S. LEWIS)

“I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of. So they can see that it’s not the answer.”¹⁵
(JIM CARREY)

2. People prefer broken cisterns. (Jeremiah 2:13b)

“...it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”¹⁶ (C.S. LEWIS)

“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” (John 4:10)

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:13-14)

Announcements

- See if there are any questions about the schedule or the retreat.

Discussion Starters:

- What was most interesting about this message?
- What are some of the broken cisterns in your life?
- Do you think Jesus can really satisfy you? Why or why not?

RETREAT TALK 2

Why Do We Need the Holy Spirit?

I CORINTHIANS 2:1-16

The Holy Spirit reveals:

1. The Centrality of Christ Crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

"The gospel is not only the most important message in all of history; it is the only essential message in all of history."¹⁷
(JERRY BRIDGES)

"The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing."¹⁸
(STEPHEN COVEY)

2. The Wisdom of Christ Crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:6-8)

"Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God."
(Romans 10:17)

3. The Wonder of Christ Crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:9-12)

- There are two kinds of people - natural and spiritual.
- You need the Holy Spirit to see Christ and to understand the Gospel.

"And he said, 'Go and see where he is, that I may send and seize him.' It was told him, 'Behold, he is in Dothan.' So he sent there horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city. When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, 'Alas, my master! What shall we do?' He said, 'Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' Then Elisha prayed and said, 'O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.' So, the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." (2 Kings 6:13-17)

Discussion Starters:

- Do you understand the message of the Gospel, and does it move you?
- Why do you think the cross is so central to Christianity?
- Are you a natural or spiritual person according to the talk?
- Do you have any questions about the Holy Spirit?
- Do you have any fears about the Holy Spirit?

RETREAT TALK 3

What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

I CORINTHIANS 12:1-20

- 1. The Holy Spirit is the giver of all gifts.**
- 2. The Holy Spirit is the giver of different gifts.**
- 3. The Holy Spirit gives every Christian gifts for the good of others.**
- 4. How can we be filled with the Holy Spirit?**

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18)

Discussion Starters:

- Instead of a discussion, take some time to pray for one another and ask God to fill you with his Spirit.

RETREAT TALK 4

Will I Make it to Heaven?

LUKE 8:4-15

Which heart will make it to heaven?

1. Some respond to the gospel with a hard heart. (Luke 8:12)

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.” (Romans 1:18)

2. Some respond to the gospel with a shallow heart. (Luke 8:13)

3. Some respond to the gospel with a crowded heart. (Luke 8:14)

- Cares, riches and pleasures can stuff us with the world so that we have no appetite for Christ.

4. Some respond to the gospel with a good heart. (Luke 8:15)

Discussion Starters:

- Did you encounter God during ministry time?
- What do you think of the message?
- Which heart do you feel most closely represents your own?
- What are some of the things that can choke or crowd our hearts?
- Are you confident you'll make it to heaven?

Book Recommendation:

- Am I Really a Christian? (MIKE MCKINLEY)

WEEK 8

Why Do We Matter?

JOHN 8:31-36

Where do we find our identity?

1. We can look outward.

“You are not just an individual. You are not your own creation. You did not invent yourself. You exist in a web of relationships. You are a social animal. Your identity is constituted in relation to other people and in being known by them.”¹⁹ (RICHARD LINTS)

2. We can look inward.

- Looking inward can be confusing.
- Looking inward can be crushing.

“Only if we are approved and loved by someone whom we esteem can we achieve any self-esteem. To use biblical terms, we need someone to bless us because we can’t bless ourselves. We are irreducibly social and relational beings. We need someone we respect to respect us. We need someone we admire to admire us. Even when modern people claim to be validating themselves, the reality is always that they are socializing themselves into a new community of peers, of “cheerleaders,” of people whose approval they crave.”²⁰ (TIM KELLER)

- Looking inward can be exclusive.

“So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’” Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:31-36)

- True freedom is not the ability to do whatever you want, it’s the ability to do what is good and best.

3. We should look upward.

“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:26-27)

“He left Judea and departed again for Galilee. And he had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.” (John 4:3-6)

Announcements

- Announce the date of the Celebration Dinner.
- Do a brief recap of the retreat for those who have missed it and let them know they can watch the retreat videos online to catch up.

Discussion Starters:

- What point stood out to you most from the message?
- Where is your identity found?
- Where do you tend to look to find meaning (outward - how others view you or inward - how you feel about yourself)?
- How does the culture’s current emphasis on looking inward to find our identity affect us?
- Do you think that we can have freedom and still have boundaries (remember the soccer match analogy)?
- What difference do you think it would make if you looked upward?
- What do you think it would take to find your worth in Christ?

Book Recommendation:

- Making Sense of God (TIMOTHY KELLER)

WEEK 9

Is Christianity Really Worth It?

MATTHEW 13:44-46

Three idols that try to outshine Christianity:

1. The idol of money.

“And behold, a man came up to him, saying, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?’ And he said to him, ‘Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.’ He said to him, ‘Which ones?’ And Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ The young man said to him, ‘All these I have kept. What do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’ When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” (Matthew 19:16-22)

2. The idol of sex.

3. The idol of success.

“I have an iron will, and all of my will has always been to conquer some horrible feeling of inadequacy... I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being and then I get to another stage and think I’m mediocre and uninteresting...Again and again. My drive in life is from this horrible fear of being mediocre. And that’s always pushing me, pushing me. Because even though I’ve become Somebody, I still have to prove that I’m Somebody. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will.”²¹ (MADONNA)

How do we uncover this treasure?

- Recognize His worth.
- Respond with joy.

Announcements

- Announce the date of the Celebration Dinner and encourage guests to think about who they can invite.
- Announce the date for your Bridge study.

Discussion Starters:

- How do you feel about this message?
- What are some reasons you see people resist Christianity?
- Right now, does anything seem more valuable to you than Christ?
- What idols have you seen in your life, and how have they affected you?
- Which car do you think you are in? Which do you want to be in?
- What do you think you have to do to get into the white car?
- Are you able to make Jesus number one in your life?
What is stopping you?

Book Recommendation:

- Counterfeit Gods (TIMOTHY KELLER)

WEEK 10

Where Do We Go From Here?

ACTS 2:37-47

1. Repent. (Acts 2:38)
2. Be baptized. (Acts 2:38,41)
3. Join a local church. (Acts 2:42-47)

“The freelance Christian, who would be a Christian but is too superior to belong to the visible Church upon earth in one of its forms, is simply a contradiction in terms.”²² (C.E.B. CRANFIELD)

Why do we need the church?

- **It's central to God's purposes.**

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

“If the church is central to God's purpose, as seen in both history and the gospel, it must surely also be central to our lives. How can we take lightly what God takes so seriously? How dare we push to the circumference what God has placed at the center?”²³ (JOHN STOTT)

- **It's central to our growth.**

“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

- **It's central to our experience of God.**

“God will manifest his presence to you in congregational worship in ways you can never know, even in the most glorious secret worship. That's because you are not only a temple of God as an individual, but the Bible says, and far more often, that Christians collectively are God's temple. God manifests his presence in different ways to the living stones of the temple, when they are gathered, than he does to them when they are apart.”²⁴ (DONALD WHITNEY)

4. Devote yourself to spiritual disciplines. (Acts 2:42-46)

- Read the Bible.
- Listen to teaching.
- Fellowship with other Christians.
- Pray.

Announcements

- Remind folks about the Celebration Dinner and the Bridge Study.

Discussion Starters:

- What are your thoughts or reactions to the talk?
- What is your biggest excuse for missing church?
- Where do you think you stand with God as a result of the Bridge Course?
- What do you think about being baptized?
- How do you feel about joining a church?

Book Recommendation:

- Rediscover Church (COLLIN HANSEN & JONATHAN LEEMAN)

CELEBRATION DINNER

Who Really Needs God?

LUKE 15:11-32

The Story of the Prodigal Son:

- 1. Reckless.**
- 2. Regret.**
- 3. Repentance.**
- 4. Reception.**

“Jesus was underlining the fact that – despite assumptions to the contrary – the reality of the love of God for us is often the last thing in the world to dawn upon us. As we fix our eyes upon ourselves, our past failures, our present guilt, it seems impossible to us that the Father could love us... [The problem is] the guilt-ridden son was calculating on the basis of his sin, rather than on the basis of his father’s character.”²⁵
(SINCLAIR FERGUSON)

- 5. Refusal.**

“What is the problem? Pride in his good deeds, rather than remorse over his bad deeds, was keeping the older son out of the feast of salvation. The elder brother’s problem is his self-righteousness, the way he uses his moral record to put God and others in his debt to control them and get them to do what he wants.”²⁶ (TIM KELLER)

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