

Construction in Progress: Building Bridges

Introduction:

- When's the last time you felt wronged or betrayed? What did that moment feel like? Was the person that hurt you a brother or sister in Christ? Have you and the person that hurt you made up?
 - Hurt feelings and betrayal aren't something that only impact us as people, but is also something Christ himself experienced. In Mark 14 we can see Him betrayed multiple times simply within one chapter. First, Judas conspires to betray him, then the high priests and Pharisees heap lies on Him in order to convict him. Finally, at the end of the chapter, Peter, who claimed to love Jesus denies him three times just as Jesus prophesied.
 - Upon his resurrection, Jesus has every right to scold or even cast away Peter. Instead, He does something entirely different. Read John 21:15-17.
- Jesus takes this moment of hurt and instead extends an opportunity to Peter. He does not choose to sulk because He was wronged, but instead allows Peter and opportunity to redeem himself and make things right between them.
 - When we are wronged by our brothers and sisters in Christ, do we choose to cast them off and sulk, or do we repair the wrongs in order to make things right?

Where we Start:

- We all would love to say that we would never hurt anyone we love or anyone in our church family, but unfortunately human nature has different plans in mind. Not only do we hurt our church family at times, but often times we only want to accept a portion of the blame. Is that what Christ calls us to do?
 - Just as comparing wrongs is a contest with no winner, our walk and relationship with Christ is a losing battle if we are competing our working against each other instead of working together for Him.
 - Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-26. Is Paul calling us to “run” against each other?

 - What is the purpose of this passage instead? _____
 - Our “race” in life is not a contest of who can get to Christ first, but is instead a race of staying focused on God and working together to make sure we work earnestly for Him.
- Conflict amongst our family in Christ is a contest with no winners. We are called to unity in Christ, and we are able to best edify Christ when we are at peace with one another.
 - How important is peace? Read Philippians 4:2-3. Paul calls the two sisters to come to the same mind in Christ, but who else does He ask to step in? _____
 - Read Matthew 18:15-17. If a conflict can't be resolved between two people, what are we called to do? _____

How we Grow:

- In order for us to be able to be at peace with each other, we have to do something even more difficult; Forgive. Forgiveness is not something that is optional for us as believers, but something that God calls us to do (Matthew 6:14-15).
 - The more we understand how much we need God's forgiveness, the more inclined we are to share it with our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - Because of our attachment to God, we are called to live in a different way.
Read 1 John 1:6-7.
 - What are we called to do in this passage? _____
 - What does it mean if we refuse to do this? _____
 - Does a singular sin automatically throw us out of God's forgiveness? _____
 - If we choose to have an unloving or unforgiving attitude with our brothers and sisters in Christ we are not honoring God but instead are living as part of the world. (1 John 2:9)
 - Loving our brethren in Christ is a defining characteristic of a Christian, and is commanded by Jesus (John 13:35).
- God forgives us because He loves us. He loves us because we are His children and have chosen to be born again through Him. The same pattern applies to our relationship with our family in Christ. Because we love them, we forgive them, and we love them because they are also children of God just as we are.
 - Just because we forgive one another doesn't mean things will always end on the terms we wish, but if the act we are forgiving has not caused or means any harm, it is on us to forgive them and let it go. We don't catalogue every sin we have done against God, and if He can forgive us then we can find it in ourselves to forgive our brethren.

The "finished" Product:

- Just as Jesus offered Peter the opportunity of a second chance despite his denial, we are offered a similar opportunity (1 Peter 1:3) not only with Christ, but with our family in Christ as well.
 - Because we are born again in Christ we are called to live like Him; part of living like Christ is making the first move to make amends and build bridges between our family, even if the fault isn't ours.
 - By willing to take this first step we not only allow opportunity for others to forgive us, but give our family in Christ opportunity to grow and forgive others in the future as well.
- Jesus took the first step to make amends with Peter after his denial. If Christ can do that for someone who utterly hurt Him, we can by following the instructions in Ephesians 4:32 and forgive each other, just as Christ has forgiven us.