



Sermon Discussion Guide: Building a Bridge

Series: *Mind the Gap: Building Peace Across Divides*

Date: 07/20/2025

Scripture: *Ephesians 2:11–22 (The Message)*

Opening Prayer

God of connection and grace, thank you for the bridge you built for us through Jesus. You tore down the walls that separated us from you and from one another. As we reflect together, open our hearts to see where we can build bridges in our relationships, our community, and our world. Give us courage to take even the smallest step toward peace. Amen.

Introduction & Context

Before 1869, the Missouri River was seen as a barrier—dangerous, wide, and unpredictable. Getting across meant ferries, boats, or long detours. But the **Hannibal Bridge** changed that. It linked the East and the West, making commerce, opportunity, and connection possible in new ways.

Bridges are built to **connect**.

Walls, on the other hand, are built to **divide**—like the Great Wall of China or the Berlin Wall. Walls protect, isolate, and control. Bridges connect, include, and open the way forward.

In Ephesians, Paul writes that **Jesus is our bridge**. Through his life, death, and resurrection, he tore down the walls of hostility that divided insiders and outsiders, and made one new humanity.

Peacemaking is like that—it's **bridge-building**. It's slow, hard, holy work. And sometimes, like the man in *The Bridge Builder* poem, we build bridges for people who come after us, even if we never cross them ourselves.





Discussion Questions

1. Bridges and Walls in Your Life

- Can you think of a “bridge” someone built for you—someone who made connection possible?
- Where do you still see walls—personally, socially, or spiritually?

2. Jesus the Bridge-BUILDER

Ephesians 2:14 says, *“He tore down the wall we used to keep each other at a distance... and created a new kind of human being, a fresh start for everybody.”*

- What “walls” do you think Paul is talking about?
- How does Jesus’ example of reconciliation challenge how we see others?

3. Why Bridge-Building Is Hard

Bridges take work—planning, effort, and sacrifice.

- What makes it hard to take the first step toward someone who feels distant?
- What fears or assumptions hold us back from connecting across differences?

4. Building Bridges Today

In the sermon, Pastor Shawn offered these steps for peacemaking:

- Get Curious. Don’t assume; ask someone their story.
 - Go First. Take the first step in a strained relationship.
 - Name the Gap. Acknowledge the distance with grace.
 - Do Something Together. Serve, share a meal, pray, or work on a project side by side.
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- Which of these feels most doable for you right now?
 - Who is God nudging you to move toward—not with judgment, but with curiosity and compassion?



Application & Challenge

This week, choose one small “plank” to lay in a bridge you’re building:

- Reach out to someone you’ve drifted from.
- Ask a question and really listen to the answer.
- Share a meal or do an activity with someone who’s different from you.
- Pray for someone you’re struggling to connect with.

Remember: you don’t have to fix everything. You just have to start.

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for the bridge you built through Jesus.

You brought together those who were far apart.

Help us to see where you’re calling us to build bridges in our own lives—to reach across divides, to listen, to serve, to love.

Give us the courage to start, and the faith to keep going even when it’s hard.

Amen.

Key Takeaway

Bridges connect. Walls divide. Jesus tore down the walls of hostility and built a bridge to God—and to one another. Now we do the same.

This guide was developed from original content with the assistance of ChatGPT.