

As I contemplated the theme for today, I kept on thinking about a GPS navigation receiver. I read a few funny stories about how a GPS device had led a few people astray. The Global Positioning System is a satellite based navigation system made up of a network of 24 satellites placed into orbit by the US Department of Defense. It was intended to be used by the military, but in the 1980's the government made the system available for civilian use. GPS are meant to point people in the right direction. It's not hard to see how that would apply to our subject for today—how to help others cross the bridge. My overall question would be, "Is my GPS navigation working? Is it being used by God to give direction to others so that they know how to find the bridge?" I hope you will ask yourself that kind of question as I unfold this teaching.

G - Grateful receivers; thankful for the gift. In the Old Testament there is a very interesting story that presents a profound truth. Samaria, the capitol of Israel, was under siege and there was no way to receive supplies as the Arameans surrounded the city on all sides. In **2 Kings 7:3-11** we read a story about four men with leprosy.

- ✓ "At dusk . . . edge of the camp." (verse 5) Even though they had decided to go no matter what, they were cautious. This whole subject of approaching an "enemy" camp can be fearful.
- ✓ "This is a day of good news." (verse 9) They recognized the miracle and they fully participated with immense gratitude.
- ✓ "Punishment will overtake us." (verse 9) The word can be translated "guilt" or "iniquity." If they would keep this wonderful news to themselves it would be as if to sin and the consequences would be punishment.

"As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain." (2 Corinthians 6:1)

P - People lovers; people don't care about how much you know until they know how much you care. The most used word in the Bible besides God is love. People matter so much so that the heartbeat of the Bible's message is: "God so loved the world." We see this in Jesus in **John 4:4-10**.

- ✓ "He had to go through Samaria." (verse 4) This means he was propelled to go. He purposefully moved toward the broken people in that region.
- ✓ "When a Samaritan woman . . . Jesus said to her." (verse 7) Jesus initiated a conversation with a Samaritan, a woman, a person who was immoral. All those were off limits, but because of his compassion for her spiritual need he led her to personal salvation, and one day we will meet this woman in heaven.
- ✓ "Gift of God." (verse 10) He knew that the gift that he had to offer could change her life. Love made him want to offer her the best gift of all.

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." (Matthew 9:36)

S - Story tellers; if there is any distinctive that characterized Jesus it would be his proclivity to use a story. There are plenty of examples of Jesus, but I want emphasize **Acts 8:29-35**.

- ✓ "The Spirit told Philip." (verse 29) Several times the Holy Spirit prompted Philip to do something and he did it. It put him in position to touch another life.
- ✓ "Do you understand what you are reading?" (verse 30) He runs to the chariot with eagerness, but he waits to discern the man's openness to the story.
- ✓ "Told him the good news about Jesus." (verse 35) Our GPS has arrived at the destination. We can never make anyone believe Christ's story, but if we get to the destination of sharing it, we have followed through with God's purpose for you and me.

"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15)

Conclusion: Are you the kind of GPS instrument God can use?

Reflective Questions:

1. Do you have any funny stories about using a GPS? Do you like using a GPS? Why or why not?
2. How does the analogy of a GPS apply to our life as bridge builders? Which aspect outlined in this teaching challenges you the most? Why?
3. What stands out to you in the story from II Kings 7; from John 4; from Acts 8? What do those stories have in common? What do you learn from them?
4. If the message today is a progression, where are you on the scale of 1-10 for being a useful GPS Christ follower (Grateful receivers: 1-3, People lovers: 4-6, Story tellers: 7-10)
5. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you through this teaching?

Reading Schedule for November 16-22

We will finish the letter known as II Corinthians, along with one chapter from the Gospel of John that presents the significance of building bridges to people who need the good news. II Corinthians is a great book to go along with our theme of reaching people. “We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” 4:7 was one of the verses we read this past week. It is all about God reflecting himself through us using our generosity, hardships, witnessing and our love for people. You will read about these themes this week as we begin with chapter 8

November 16: **II Corinthians 8** – What stands out to you from this chapter? What do you want to apply to your life? “But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.” (verse 7) The word “excel” stands out to me. It means to give our best. Earnestness is really the word for zeal . . . to be passionate for God. When someone is enthusiastic about their relationship with God, it is contagious. How enthusiastic are you about your faith these days? Do you think people notice Christ in you? Why or why not?

November 17: **II Corinthians 9** – What verse gets your attention from this chapter on generosity? How generous are you? “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (verse 7) There is no other verse about giving that is clearer than this one. There is a process of prayerfully deciding what to give and doing it with joyfulness verses obligation. God is concerned about how you give even more than how much you give. Do you have a difficult time letting go of your money? What might help you to be more generous? What is your obstacle in generous giving?

November 18: **II Corinthians 10** – What verse stands out to you from this chapter? What does this chapter say about ministry? “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (vv. 4 & 5) God’s mighty weapons are available to us as we fight against Satan’s “strongholds.” In other places in the Bible it calls it “Satan’s foothold.” Both are the same idea. What are the weapons that God has provided? How are they mentioned in Ephesians 6:10-18? I think of “prayer” when I think of the greatest weapon that Christ has given us. Others have suggested the Word of God which is mentioned as the sword of the Spirit. How does Satan try to get a foothold in your life? How have God’s weapons helped you? What does it mean to put on the full armor of God?

November 19: **II Corinthians 11** – What gets your attention from this chapter? Why? “And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.” (vv. 14 & 15) Again, there was a reference to Satan’s activities in trying to defeat what God wants to do. When we want to reach out to other people in ministry to them so that they might see the love of Christ in us, there will be opposition. The opposition might come from them, but sometimes it comes through the circumstances of life. Sometimes it comes through people. Sometimes he uses our own thought life. Satan is disguising himself as an angel of light so often. At the same time, the Bible calls Satan the prince of darkness. How does Satan try to deceive you? How does this affect your excitement to reach out to others? How can you overcome the opposition of the devil?

November 20: **II Corinthians 12** – What verse stands out to you? What truth gets your attention? How might you apply it to your life? “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.” (verse 9) This has to be one of my favorite verses. All of us have struggled with challenges in life. We have prayed prayers that seemingly God doesn’t answer. What are we to do next? The answer is to “trust God.” We must rely on the Lord. Our weakness not only helps develop us into stronger Christians, it also deepens our dependence on God as we rely on the strength of the Lord. This will produce an effective witness. How can God use our weakness as well as our strengths? What do these verses teach you?

November 21: **II Corinthians 13** – What verse gets your attention? What might God be saying to you through it? “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (verse 14) This very last verse in II Corinthians is one that I often share at the close of a service. I like that it includes God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The grace of Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit are all such important parts to our spiritual lives. If you have ever questioned the validity of the Trinity, you can see it right in this verse so clearly. The grace of the Lord Jesus seen through his sacrificial death, the love of God that he would extend himself to us through his Son, and the ongoing presence of God in our lives is this internal fellowship with the Holy Spirit. There is no other blessing that would sustain your life more than having the activity of our triune God alive in you. How do you respond to this blessing? Which aspect of our three-in-one God blesses you the most?

November 22 **John 4** – What part of this story impresses you most? What do you learn from Jesus’ interaction with the woman at the well? “Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.’” (verse 10) This is one of many powerful statements that Jesus shares with this woman. I am looking at the whole story and realizing that it is such a strong example for us in “bridge building,” which is our theme for the month of November. How does this story begin? What are some of the most important parts of the conversation? What are the results of this story? How might you live by Jesus’ example as presented in this chapter?

Prayer: Thankful hearts for God’s goodness; ministry to the many families that will receive a food box and a turkey this Saturday (November 21st); pray for the volunteers that will soon be reading buddies and/or mentors at Hallman Elementary.