

The Bridge Challenge ! (and the Extreme Bridge Challenge)

(Appropriate for mid-schoolers and older)

Michael R. Daily 2/28/97

(Reference: Portions taken from material by Rev. Rob Mahon, The Navigators, Albuquerque, NM)

Introduction

This is a method of sharing the gospel with kids. It is effective with kids 5 to 7 year olds but can also be used with older kids and adults with minor modifications. Middle schoolers (ages 12 to 14) can memorize and present this to younger kids as a first entry into learning to share the gospel. This particular narrative is for talking to Awana kids. They will have most of the verses memorized and they can quote them for you. For other groups you will need to quote the verses for them. Older kids can look the verses up in their bibles if they can't quote them.

The Bridge Challenge is a voluntary, extra-credit activity that members of our mid-school group choose to do or not do. It is not required. If they choose to do the Bridge Challenge they memorize this presentation. When they believe they can do it effectively they present it to me as their audience while they present and draw on the white board. If they do a good job they receive a Christian music CD of their choice or something of an equivalent value. In addition they also receive feedback on things they did well or could use improvement on.

At that point they can stop OR they can elect to move on to the EXTREME Bridge Challenge (American mid-schoolers seem to like things to be either awesome or extreme). If they elect to also do the Extreme Bridge Challenge this means that we will arrange for them to be the special speaker (usually an adult position) at a class of kids in the 5 to 7 year old range. On that night I go with them to the class of younger kids and introduce them and they present the Bridge to the younger kids.

A typical class of 5 to 7 year olds will have 15 to 20 kids in it. I also will help keep things on track if the student has trouble but in most cases that has not been much of a problem. If the student completes the Extreme Bridge Challenge they receive a second Christian music CD or something of similar value. The Bridge takes 20 minutes to present so a time slot of 30 minutes works well to give time for questions or for settling the little kids down, etc.

Presenting it to the Mid-Schoolers

To introduce the Bridge Challenge to the Mid-schoolers we have a night where I explain what we are doing and present it to them. To make it fun I treat them as if they are kindergarteners since that is what their audience will be. In Awanas, K through 2nd grade is called "Sparks" and the little kids are called, "Sparkies". So I will talk to the mid-schoolers as if they were little kids.

I usually ask them how many know the Sparks song and I will make the one that raise their hands come up to the front as a group and sing the Sparks song to the group – things like that. I might ask how many of them know how to read and congratulate them on being such a smart group of sparkies, etc. If one of the kids is talking while I am presenting I will say something like, "I need you to be quiet little boy", etc.

In addition to introducing the Bridge Challenge and showing them how to do it this is also an interesting way to present the Gospel to the mid-schoolers, some of whom may not be Christians or may not fully understand the gospel.

The following pages, not including this page, should be printed out for a handout for the kids who think they may want to do the Bridge Challenge.

I tell them that if they are not sure to take one anyway, just in case. It never hurts for them to look over the Gospel again for their own personal use.

The kids can work on it at their own pace and present it anytime during the school year.

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Narrative

Hi kids. My name is Mr. Daily and I will be your special speaker tonight.

Tonight I am going to show you what's called the Bridge Illustration. How many of you have seen the Bridge Illustration before? Raise your hands.

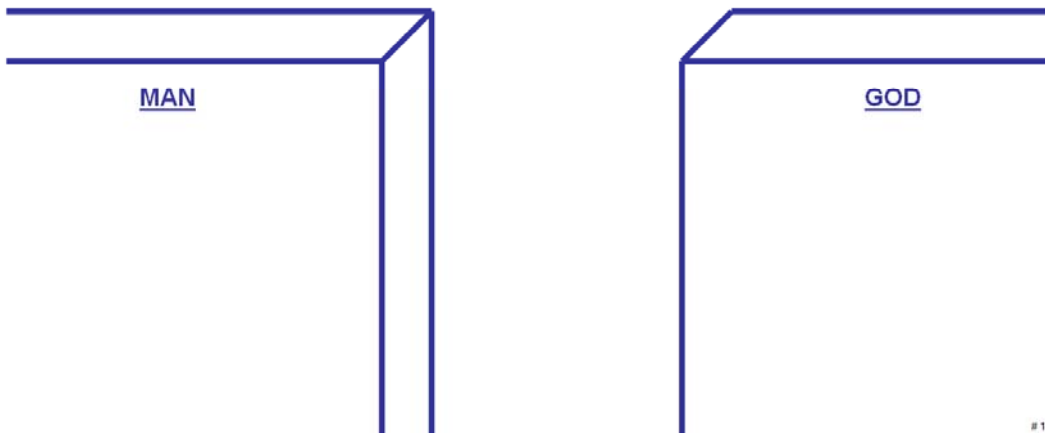
The Bridge Illustration explains the story of the Bible. Now its not a story IN the Bible like the story of Moses or Noah or Easter or Christmas. Its the story of the WHOLE Bible and it ties everything in the Bible together.

Now since its my story I will do most of the talking but from time to time I am going to ask you questions. When I ask a question and you know the answer, raise your hand. If I pick you then you can tell us the answer nice and loud so everyone can hear, OK?

Say "Yes, Mr. Daily! (Try it again, 1 2 3, Yes, Mr. Daily).

(If a midschooler presents it would be, yes Mr. Jim or yes Miss Laura, etc.)

How many of you have seen the Grand Canyon? I'm going to draw a canyon on the board.



This canyon is much bigger than the Grand Canyon. In fact, this canyon is so big it makes the Grand Canyon look "little bitty"!

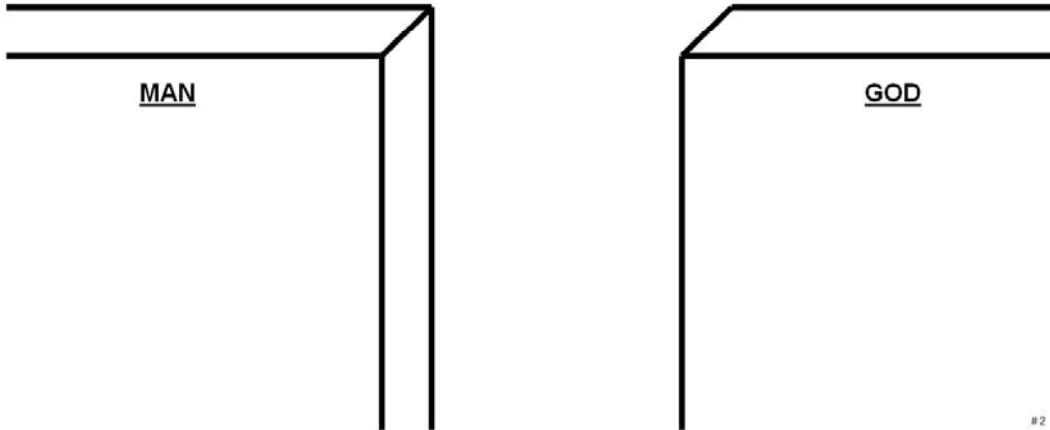
God is on this side (the right) and Man is on the other side. Man means all people, Moms, Dads, and kids.

Who knows or can look up Romans 6:23? (While they say the verse write it at the top of the board). This will take a few seconds but then the story will go quickly. (Option: Write the reference but not the actual verse)

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death
but the free gift of God is eternal life
in Christ Jesus our lord”



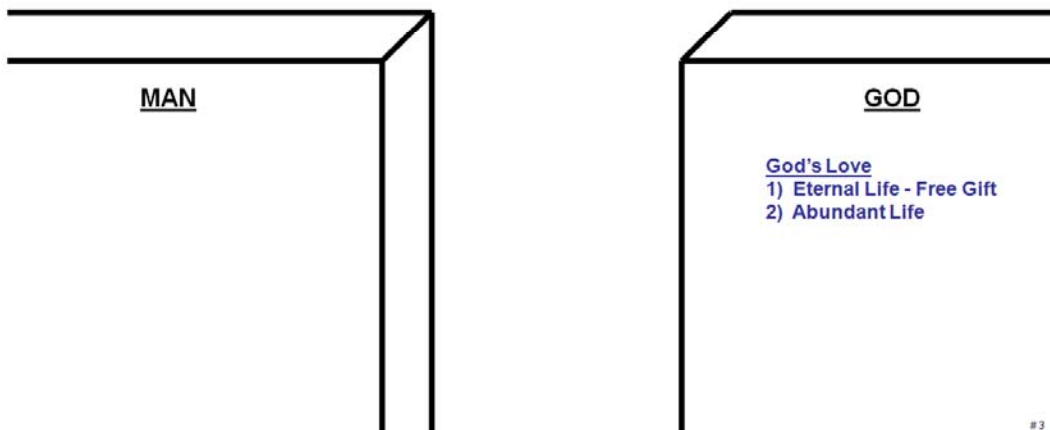
#2

The Bible says that God loves us and he wants to have a personal relationship with us. He has shown this in two ways. First God want us to have eternal life or to live with Him in heaven forever and He wants us to have that as a free gift (underline “free gift” in Romans 6:23). In other words it isn’t something we deserve or that we can earn by being good.

God also want us to have an abundant life on the earth. Does anyone know what abundant means? Abundant means “more than you need”. God want us to have more than we need to have a safe and happy life on the earth

ROMANS 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death
but the free gift of God is eternal life
in Christ Jesus our lord”



#3

But something has separated us from God and these blessings. Does anyone know what that is?

The Bible says that “sin” has separated us from God and these blessings.

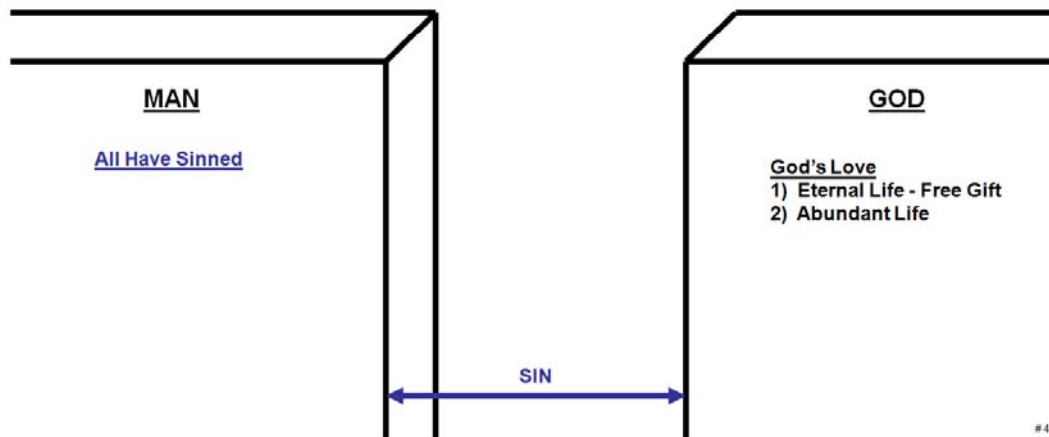
Does anyone know or can look up Romans 3:23?

Romans 3:23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

The Bible says that everyone has sinned against God, you, me, the Pastor, your mom and dad, everyone has sinned against God

ROMANS 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death
but the **free gift** of God is eternal life
in Christ Jesus our lord”



The Bible also teaches that there are two kinds of sin.

The first kind of sin is pretty familiar, its called “Disobeying God” and that just means that we know something is wrong but we go ahead and do it anyway or we know that something is right but we choose not to do it.

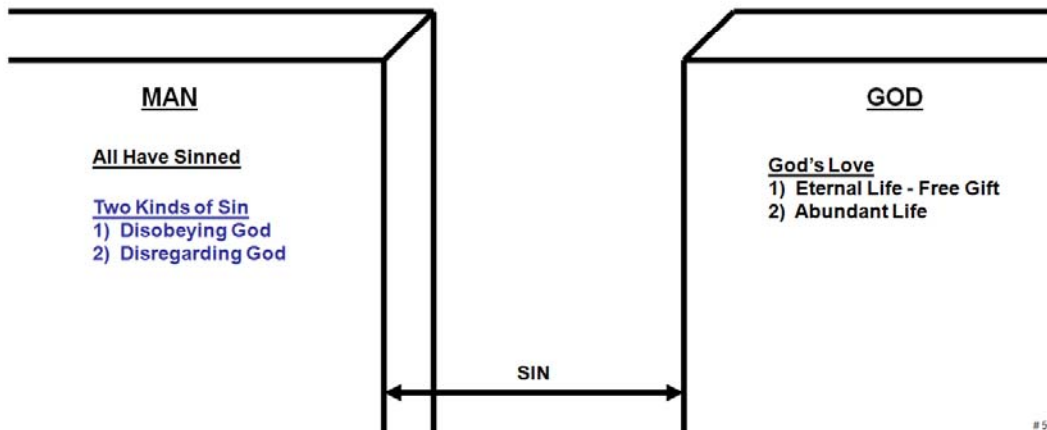
The other type of sin is called “Disregarding God”.

This means that as I go through my everyday life I don't ask God what He wants me to do I just do what I think is best.

For example, when I make decisions about what TV shows or movies to watch, who I should have as friends, how I should spend my money, and when I'm older things like what kind of job I should have, who I should marry, what kind of house I should live in I need to ask God what He wants me to do and not just do what I want

ROMANS 6:23

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The Bible teaches that there are three “Results of Sin”:

The first one is “Separation” from God and this means that as I go through my everyday life I don’t consult God as to what we wants me to do.

I just do what I think is best.

Since I don’t seek God’s direction then I’m pretty much on my own, God isn’t going to help me in my life.

The second result of sin is “Judgment”.

This means that at the end of my life, when I die, I will stand before God and he will look through my life to see if there is any sin.

If there is sin in my life then God will judge that sin.

If I hadn’t sinned against God then He wouldn’t have to judge me.

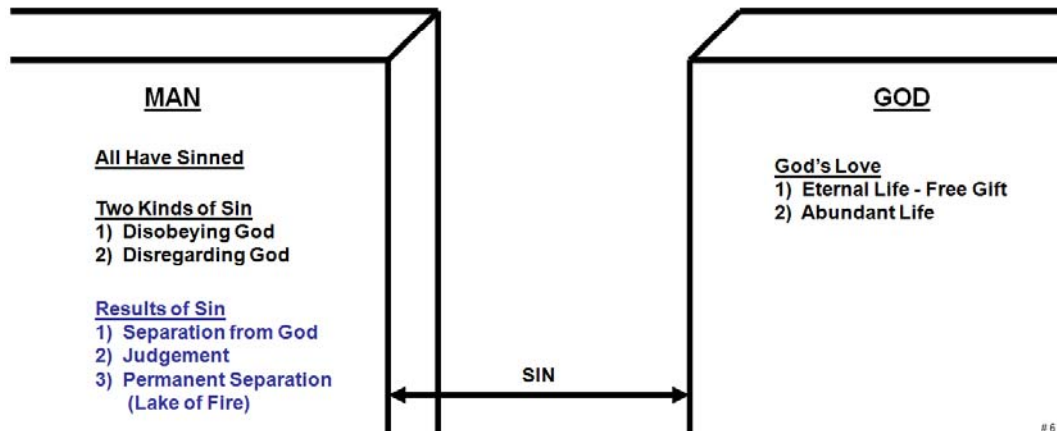
The third result of sin is “Permanent Separation”.

This means that when I stand before God at the end of my life and he looks through my life, if he finds any sin then God will separate me from Him and from everything that is good FOREVER!

The Bible says that those who are separated from God will be thrown into the Lake of Fire.

ROMANS 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death
but the free gift of God is eternal life
in Christ Jesus our lord”



How many sins does it take for us to be separated from God forever and to be thrown into the lake of fire?

Who knows or can look up James 2:10?

James 2:10 - For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

It only takes ONE sin to be separated from God and to be thrown into the Lake of Fire.

That's very serious. One sin is very serious, isn't it.

Why is one sin so serious? To understand why one sin is so serious we have to look at who God is.

The Bible says that God is Love.

God thinks of each of us as his own children and he really loves each of us a lot and he doesn't want us to go to the Lake of Fire.

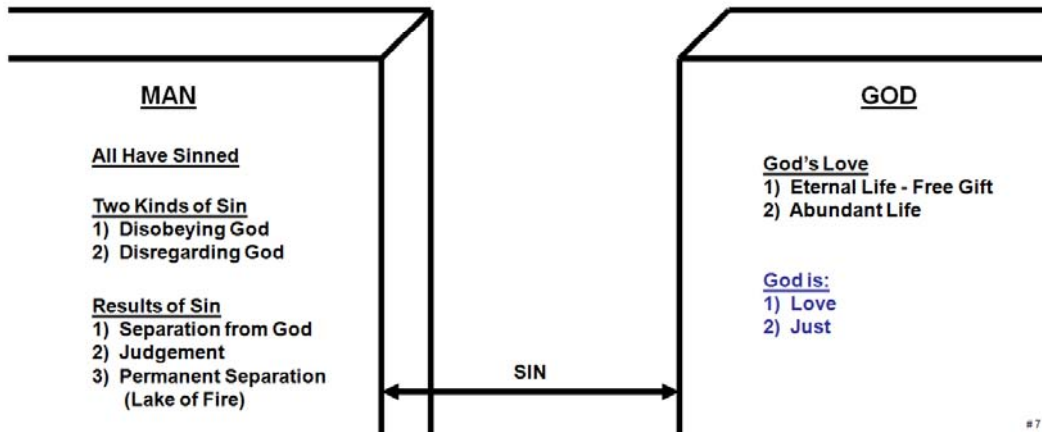
But the Bible also says that God is a God of Justice.

You see, God is a God of holiness and righteousness and purity and because of who He is He cannot allow any sin in His presence.

That is why only one sin is so serious

ROMANS 6:23

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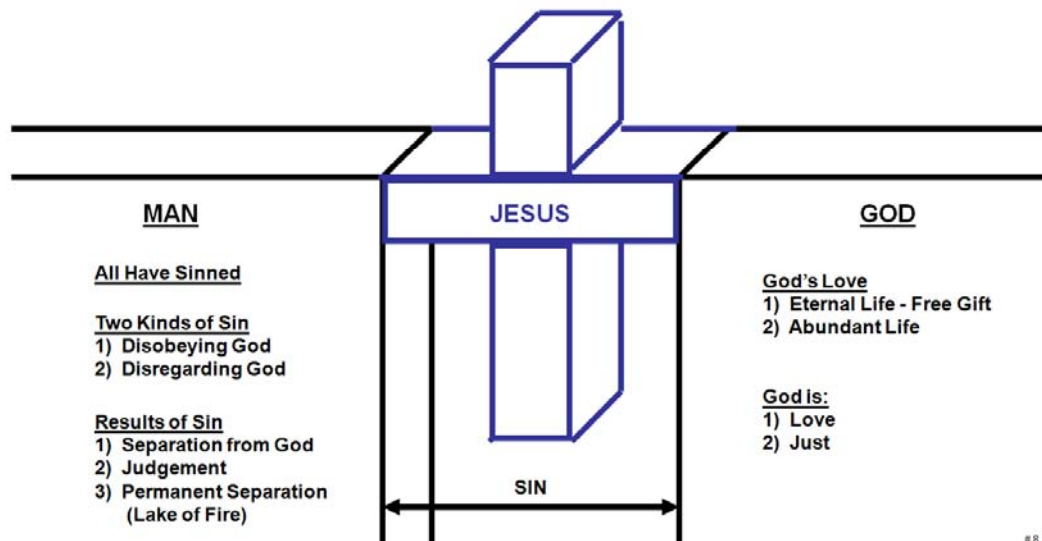


Well, so far this is really bad news since all of us have sinned against God and we all deserve to go to the Lake of Fire. But the Good News is that this is not the end of the story.

Remember, God loves us like His own children so what He decided to do was to come to the earth in the form of a man. Does anyone know the name of that man? (Jesus). Jesus was actually God who had come to the earth. By dying on the cross and shedding his blood and rising from the dead three days later He was able to pay for our sins so that we wouldn't have to. And because of this Jesus has become a bridge between us and God and now its possible to cross back over to God's side and have these blessings.

ROMANS 6:23

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But there is a trick to crossing this bridge. The Bible says that "Faith" is the key to crossing this bridge.

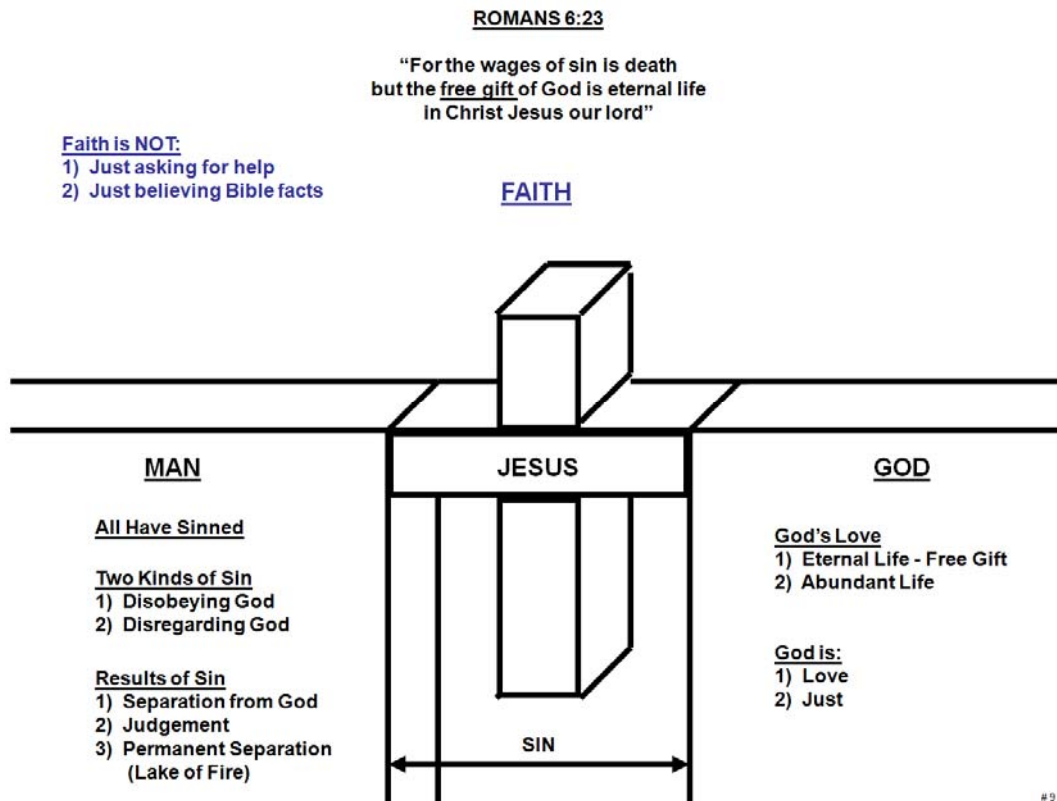
Since faith is so important we need to understand what it is. First, lets look at what it is not.

First, faith is not just asking for help when you get in trouble.

For example, saying things like, "God, if you get me out of this I promise never to do such-and-such or I promise I will do such-and-such from now on".

Faith also is not just believing facts.

For example, when I was a boy my mom took me to church and I learned about Moses and Noah and the stories of Easter and Christmas and I learned a lot about what the Bible says and that was good. But God says that knowing those stories from the Bible, also was not faith



So what is faith? Does someone know or can look up John 1:12?

John 1:12 - But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

Now this verse talks about becoming a child of God which is the same thing as crossing this bridge. In order to cross this bridge you have to do two things. What's the first thing?

First you have to believe in the name of Jesus. Now Jesus was called many things but you can boil them down to two things.

First, Jesus was called Savior. So first we have to believe that Jesus is the only one who can save us from the penalty of our sin or the Lake of Fire. We can't save ourselves by trying to be good.

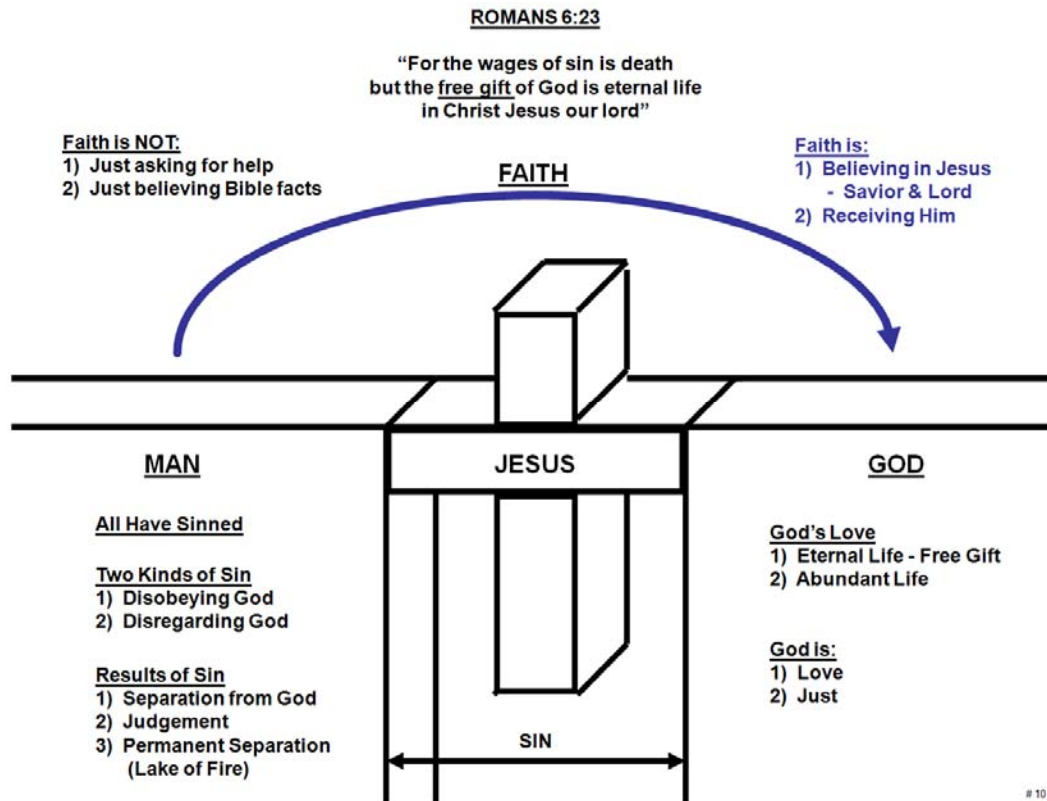
Second, Jesus was called Lord. Lord is an old word which means "leader". So the second thing we have to believe is that Jesus is worthy to be our leader because He knows what is best for us. We obey Jesus not to try to earn our way to heaven, because we can't, but because he knows what is best for us better than we do. And to the extent that we obey Him to that same extent we will have an abundant life on the earth.

Once we believe that Jesus is our Savior and Lord, what's the second thing we need to do in order to cross this bridge to God's side?

We need to receive Him as Savior and Lord and you do this by praying.

So when I was in college, when I was 18 years old I prayed a prayer that went like this: Dear Jesus, I know I can never be good enough to earn my way to heaven. I want to thank you for dying on the cross to pay for my sins and I want to ask you, right now, to come into my life and be my Lord and Savior.

The Bible says that at the moment I prayed that prayer I crossed the bridge over to God's side and from that day on God has promised me that at the end of my life I will be in heaven with Him forever and that I will have an abundant life on the earth to the extent that I follow Him and obey Him.



Now let me ask you a question but I don't want you to answer out loud I just want you to think about the answer inside. Where are you on this bridge? Are you over here on God's side (on right) knowing for sure that you have these things? Are you over here (on left), separated from God? Or are you somewhere in the middle?

My next question is if you're not sure you're on God's side but you want to be what would you have to do based on what I have said tonight? You would have to pray and ask Jesus to come be your Savior and Lord.

This is your decision and no one else can make this decision for you.

But you can pray that prayer and cross that bridge anytime you want. In fact you could even do it tonight before you go to bed.

If you want to pray this prayer tonight tell your Mom or Dad and ask them if they would pray with you so that Jesus can come into your life and be your Lord and Savior.

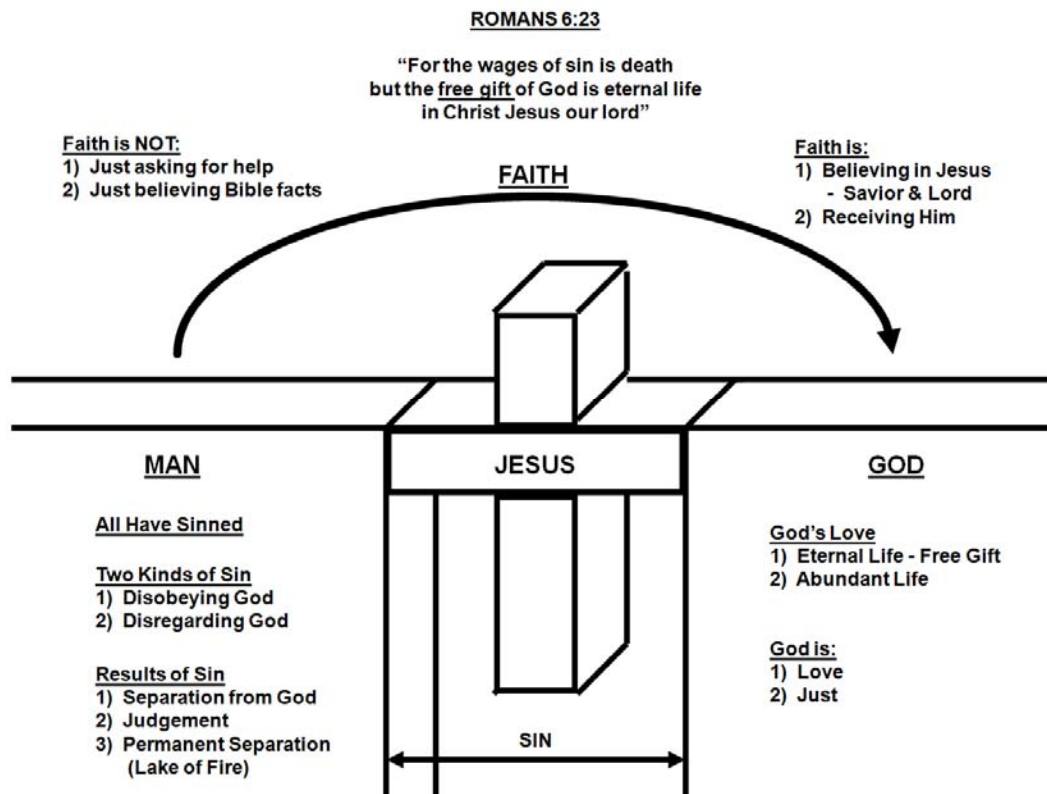
Thank you for having me as your speaker tonight.

Notes

- 1) When I ask the kids where they are on the bridge I ask them if they are on one side or the other or in the middle. Doctrinally speaking you can't be in the middle but some people will want to answer that way. That's fine – it still indicates that they are not on God's side.
- 2) The reason I ask kids to pray with mom or dad later instead of praying at the moment is:
 - a) Kids are not autonomous beings. They are under the authority of their parents.
 - b) Kids may respond out of emotion because they want to please the adults at church.
 - c) Parents may resent their child receiving Christ with me. A non-Christian dad may wonder what I did to his kid. A Christian parent may have always dreamed of the day they led their child to Christ and feel that I took that away from them.
 - d) Pastors may wonder if the conversion was real or not.

By using this approach the meeting wraps up as usual, the parents pick up the child as usual, they drive home, have their usual snack, get their jammies on, brush their teeth – in other words any emotions or other pressures have disappeared, they are back in their routine – and as they get ready to hop into bed, if they stop and ask mom or dad to pray with them to receive Christ the odds are very good that this is a true conversion. We have had a number of kids do this.

Some people feel that this method is not simple enough for small children but we have found that they actually understand most if not all of it. Although some of the Kindergarteners can't read it is still a good practice to write the words on the board because it shows that learning to read is important (the big kids are writing on the board) and some of them are in the process of learning to read so it is a good thing to do.



Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

I Peter 3:15

but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

Matthew 19:13-15

Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. 14But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." 15After laying His hands on them, He departed from there.

Ephesians 6:13-20

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 19and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

II Corinthians 5:18-21

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

I Timothy 4:11-16

Prescribe and teach these things. 12Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. 13Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. 14Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. 15Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. 16Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

1 Corinthians 15:1-9

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. 9For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *The Bridge Challenge*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 6:23, Romans 3:23, James 2:10, John 1:12*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

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