

House On The Rock Life Group Study outline 2024

February: Divine connections

Outlines for the month

Week 1: Connecting purpose

Week 2: Connecting people

Week 3: Connecting places ✓

Introduction

Our Father in heaven... may Your will be done here on earth as it is in heaven. These words from the Lord's prayer show us the need for bridges, for our father is in heaven, and we are on the earth. But thanks to Christ's work on the cross, upon which he connected these two locations in himself, we now also are seated in heavenly places. We are called to do the same for our world, to be the bridge that connects heaven to earth, leading them to Christ.

"The Gospel Blimp," is a 1967 satire of some well-meaning but misguided Christians who want to share the gospel with their neighbours. They get together to strategise about how to do it, a blimp flies over, and someone comes up with the idea of getting a blimp and using it to preach the gospel to the entire city.

So they raise the money, buy some land for the hangar, and get the blimp. The whole operation requires a corporation, a board of directors, an office, and much more. The guy who came up with the plan quits his job and goes full time with the blimp. Eventually he hires a PR agent who outfits him in a uniform and promotes his image as "the Commander." He has to neglect his family to play golf with important contacts, but the cause is worth it!

They finally get the blimp airborne and it rains down cellophane-wrapped tracts all over the city. But the people in the town are annoyed at having their yards littered with these droppings from the sky. Next they outfit the blimp with a loud PA system and make themselves even more obnoxious to everyone.

But one guy decides to leave the board of the blimp. Meanwhile, the board sees him going to the beach on Saturday with his beer-drinking neighbour. They're concerned that he's becoming "worldly." By the end of the movie, he and his wife have led their neighbours to Christ. But the blimp crowd still doesn't get it.

How strange would it be if we were so focused on building a bridge that we forgot its purpose? Imagine building a bridge that starts on one side of a deep divide, goes round on itself and then returns to the same side without ever touching the other side. Such a bridge would be useless for the purpose of connecting places. In the same way, sharing our faith is most effective when it touches both sides of the divide. We must always remember that we are but the bridge and not the destination.

Pilot text

Luke 19:1-7 1 Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. 2 Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. 3 And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." 6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. 7 But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

Thinking about our role in connecting places as part of fulfilling the great commission, what can we learn from the pilot text?

- **Be in touch.** When Jesus came to where Zacchaeus was, He immediately touched Zacchaeus' social circumstance by seeing and acknowledging him as a person. Just like a bridge needs to touch both sides that it is connecting, so we should be in touch with those we are reaching out to. If you can't touch the bridge, you can't cross it.
- **Be interested.** Jesus looked up and saw the man Zacchaeus – a father, someone who had loved ones, hopes dreams and aspirations. Everyone else saw the tax collector, but Jesus saw the person. No one likes to be treated like a subject of examination, or just a 'target' to be achieved.
- **Be informed.** Jesus knew who Zacchaeus was. He knew what mattered the most to Zacchaeus, and what it felt like to be ostracised by your closest community. Productive conversations rely on relevant information being exchanged.
- Questions for discussion (use scriptures to support your position):
 1. A preacher once said "I have nothing to discuss with an unbeliever beyond sharing the gospel. After that, I'm done. There can be no fellowship between light and darkness". How would you respond to this statement?
 2. A Christian only ever needs to read the bible in order to be informed. Agree/disagree with reasons.