
Life Group Leaders' Guide: Bridge Series — Week 2

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Open by inviting the group to pause and quiet their hearts before God.

Pray, asking Jesus to help the group recognize how He is inviting them to be part of the bridge He is building. Ask Him to reveal anything that keeps them from love, unity, and obedience, including pride, offense, busyness, comfort, or personal agendas.

Ask God to give the group humility, courage, and margin to join what He is already doing. Pray that each person would serve from authentic aloha, not from recognition or control.

Close by asking Jesus to make the group more connected, unified, and faithful to His Kingdom work.

Worship Song Suggestions (10 minutes)

"Build My Life" by Pat Barrett

"Make Room" by Community Music

"The Church" by Elevation Worship

"Holy Spirit" by Bryan and Katie Torwalt

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Question: When you think about the best community you have ever been part of, whether it was a team, a family gathering, or a friendship group, what made it feel so connected? What was the glue that held it together?

The Big Idea

God is in the business of bridging heaven and earth, and he is using the church to do it. That means our relationships with one another are not just a nice bonus of church life; they are the actual building material of the bridge. The way we love each other, stay unified, and connect our lives together is how heaven becomes visible in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and families.

Key Takeaways (5 minutes)

1. **Heaven is not only a future destination; it is also a present spiritual reality.** Ephesians 1 describes the Holy Spirit as the first installment of our heavenly inheritance, meaning God has already given us a foretaste of heaven in our lives. We are not simply waiting to experience God. We are called to steward what He has already given us.

2. **Your life is like a puzzle piece with parts designed to connect.** Identity in the body of Christ is not only about who you are as an individual. It is also about how you connect with others. Every person carries gifts, stories, and callings meant to join with others for the kingdom's sake.
 3. **Spiritual gifts are given for the unity and growth of the body.** Romans 12 makes clear that gifts such as prophecy, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, and showing mercy are not for personal gain. They are tools God uses to strengthen the church as we build together.
 4. **Kingdom relationships require health, order, and intimacy.** When one of these is missing, trust can erode, connection can weaken, and division can gain a foothold.
 5. **Love is the mortar that holds the stones together.** As described in 1 Corinthians 13, authentic love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Without love, even the most gifted community can fall apart.
 6. **Division has identifiable roots that we can resist.** A lack of wisdom, unspoken offense, pride, preference conflicts, unclear expectations, and unhealed wounds can all become entry points for division in the body.
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Discussion Questions

Section 1: Your Place in the Wall (10–15 Minutes)

Take a few minutes to get everyone talking before diving into the deeper content.

1. Pastor Mark uses the image of a stone wall at Bishop Museum, where each pōhaku is different, carefully shaped, and irreplaceable. Do you genuinely believe your stone matters in what God is building? What makes that difficult to believe at times?
 2. In this week's message, Pastor Mark said, "Your job is to be a bridge. More than that, our job is to be a bridge." What is the difference between seeing yourself as an individual bridge and seeing the church collectively as a bridge? How does that perspective change the way you show up on Sundays or in a small group?
 3. When you come to church, do you tend to arrive mainly to receive, or are you ready to connect, contribute, and build? What would it look like for you to move more fully toward connection?
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Section 2: Spiritual Gifts and Your Role (15–20 Minutes)

4. Romans 12 lists several gifts, including prophecy, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, and showing mercy. Which of these best reflects how God has wired you? Have you been actively using that gift, or has it been sitting dormant?
 5. Pastor Mark distinguished between natural abilities and spiritual gifts, explaining that spiritual gifts are directed toward the kingdom and toward people. Have you been using your gifts in that way, or have they become more self-focused? What would it look like to redirect them toward building up the body?
 6. Think of someone whose spiritual gift has meaningfully impacted your life, such as an encourager, a faithful servant, or a generous giver. Share who that person is and how their gift has shaped you.
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Section 3: Health, Order, and Intimacy

7. Pastor Mark described three essential ingredients of a kingdom relationship: health, order, and intimacy. In your closest friendships, marriage, or community relationships, which of these areas tends to be the weakest? How has that gap affected the relationship?
 8. Pastor Mark said, “If we make the priority of our friendship or relationship business, the order is off because we are not pursuing Jesus.” Have you experienced a relationship in which something other than Jesus became the center? How did that affect your connection?
 9. What would a healthy, ordered, and intimate community look like in practical terms for your group? What is one specific step your group could take to strengthen its weakest area?
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Section 4: Fighting Division With Love

10. Pastor Mark identified four main roots of division: lack of wisdom, unspoken offense, pride and preference conflicts, and unclear expectations. Which of these have you seen most often in the church communities you have been part of? Which one do you personally struggle with most?
 11. Pastor Mark said, “If you are carrying something in your heart and have not spoken about it, the offense in your heart is not working in your favor.” Is there an unspoken offense you have been holding onto toward someone in this group, this church, or a past church experience? You do not need to name names, but is there something you need to confess and release?
 12. First Corinthians 13 says that love believes all things, meaning love resists assuming the worst and chooses to pursue what is good and true about another person. Think of a relationship in which your perception has been negatively shaped. What would it look like to actively choose to believe the best about that person this week?
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Section 5: the Bigger Picture

13. Pastor Mark said that the completed puzzle, the full picture of a unified church, is a bride made ready for Christ. He described blamelessness not primarily as individual sinlessness, but as the church becoming fully unified and of one accord. How does this reshape your understanding of spiritual maturity?
 14. Pastor Mark closed with a quote about measuring success by connection: connection with children, critics, and everyone God places around us. As you reflect on your life, are you measuring success by the world's standards or by the quality of your connections with people? What would need to change?
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Practical Applications (10 minutes)

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice this week before your group meets again.

1. **Identify your connecting strengths.** Set aside time this week to prayerfully ask God, "What gift or calling have You placed in me?" Write down what comes to mind. Then ask someone who knows you well whether they recognize the same gift or calling in you.
 2. **Address an unspoken offense.** If you are carrying hurt or resentment toward a brother or sister in Christ, commit to having a conversation this week. Approach it with humility, speak directly, and focus on restoration rather than proving yourself right.
 3. **Build a new connection.** Reach out to someone at church you do not know well, someone whose story and gifts you have not yet had the opportunity to discover. Invite them for coffee and ask questions such as, "What could you talk about for an hour without preparation?" "What are you dreaming about?" or "What experience has shaped you most?"
 4. **Pray intentionally for unity.** Set a reminder on your phone to pray against division in your home, friendships, and church. Ask God to make authentic love the mortar that holds the community together.
 5. **Evaluate your three circles.** Draw three overlapping circles labeled health, order, and intimacy. Consider one important relationship in your life and honestly evaluate where those areas are strong and where they need attention. Share what you discover with someone you trust, then ask them to pray with you.
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Closing Reflection (5 minutes)

Close your group time by praying together. Use these prompts to guide your prayer:

- Thank God for the specific people in your group and name what you appreciate about each stone in the wall.

- Confess any ways your group has allowed comfort or preference to keep you from connecting to a bigger picture.
 - Ask God to reveal any unspoken offenses or unhealed wounds that need to be addressed.
 - Pray specifically for the windward side of Oahu that the church would be a unified bridge that brings the reality of heaven into that community.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit, your first installment of heaven, to make himself more known in your daily life this week.
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Memory Verse of the Week

Ephesians 1:13-14. The passage describes the Holy Spirit as the first installment of our heavenly inheritance, sealing us as God's own possession and guaranteeing the full redemption yet to come.

Read it slowly. Let it remind you that heaven is not just coming; it has already arrived in you.

Additional Discussion Questions to Choose From

Pastor Mark describes God as being “in the business of bridging heaven and earth” from the very beginning. How does understanding this overarching story of Scripture change the way you see your daily life and relationships?

Pastor Mark challenges the idea that the ultimate goal of the Christian life is simply personal purity. Instead, he argues that forgiveness frees us to participate in greater kingdom work. Do you agree, and how does this reshape your understanding of why holiness matters?

The image of a puzzle piece suggests that every person has connecting parts designed to join with others, rather than simply exist independently. In what ways have you treated your faith as a solo endeavor rather than a connected one? What might change if you shifted that perspective?

Pastor Mark identifies four roots of division: lack of wisdom, unspoken offense, pride and preference wars, and unclear expectations. Which one is most difficult for you to guard against in your relationships, and why?

Ephesians 1 describes the Holy Spirit as the “first installment” of our heavenly inheritance, meaning that heaven has already been deposited into our lives. How does viewing the Holy Spirit this way, rather than only as a comforter, expand or challenge your understanding of being Spirit-filled?

Drawing from 1 Corinthians 13, Pastor Mark argues that love is the mortar holding the church's stones together. Without love, even extraordinary spiritual gifts are meaningless. Where is that mortar strong in your church community, and where does it seem to be thinning?

Bonhoeffer is quoted as saying that Jesus is not only the mediator between God and humanity, but also between people. What would it look like practically to make Jesus the unifying center of your relationships rather than shared interests, preferences, or backgrounds?

Pastor Mark presents Revelation not primarily as a story of doom, but as the culmination of a wedding, with the church as a bride prepared through unity rather than individual sinlessness. How does this reframe the purpose of the church today?

Pastor Mark warns against the “holy huddle,” a close group of believers who become comfortable with one another but stop welcoming new connections. How do you discern the difference between growing deeper in community and becoming closed off?

Pastor Mark describes three overlapping qualities of a healthy kingdom relationship: intimacy, health, and order. In your most significant relationships within the body of Christ, which quality is most underdeveloped? What would it take to strengthen it?

Leader Notes

- This message touches personal themes: belonging, loneliness, church hurt, disconnection, spiritual gifts, comparison, offense, trust, forgiveness, and unity. Create a safe space where people can be honest about community without feeling judged, rushed, or pressured to become deeply connected overnight.
- A helpful direction for discussion: move from “I go to church” to “I belong to the body”; from passive attendance to meaningful connection; from self-protection to Spirit-led vulnerability; from preference-driven relationships to kingdom relationships; and from silent offense to pursuing peace.
- The goal is not to shame people for feeling guarded, introverted, hurt, or disconnected. The goal is to help them see that Jesus is building us together as living stones. Each person has a place, a role, and something meaningful to offer the body.
- Keep returning to the central truth: authentic love is the mortar that holds the bridge together. Unity is not built on sameness or personality compatibility, but through Jesus as we practice humility, forgiveness, honesty, patience, and faithfulness with one another.
- Be careful not to let the discussion become gossip or venting about others. The message named roots of division like unspoken offense, pride, unclear expectations, lack of wisdom, and unhealed wounds. Guide people toward personal reflection: “What is God inviting me to own, heal, clarify, or repair?”
- When discussing gifts and connection, keep the tone encouraging, not comparative. Spiritual gifts are not for self-promotion; they are given to build up the body. Help people ask, “Where are my connective points, and how might God use my story, gifts, and relationships for His kingdom?”
- Encourage gentle next steps: learn someone’s story, pray with someone, affirm a gift you see, invite someone into your circle, pursue reconciliation, or ask God where you fit in the bigger picture. Leave people with hope: no one is an accidental stone, and together we reflect Jesus in a way we never could alone.

5-Day Devotional: Bridging Heaven and Earth

Day 1: Heaven Is Not a Destination; It Is a Reality

Reading: Ephesians 1:13–14

Devotional:

Most of us have been taught to think of heaven as a place we go when we die. But Scripture paints a far more urgent and exciting picture. Heaven is a spiritual reality that God has been pressing into the earth since creation. The Holy Spirit living inside you is not a comfort blanket. He is a down payment, proof that heaven has already begun its work in you.

You are not waiting to arrive somewhere. You are already carrying something. The question is not whether heaven is available to you. The question is whether you are making it available to the people around you. Today, ask the Holy Spirit to make you more aware of the moments where heaven is trying to break through in your ordinary life.

Reflection:

In what areas of your daily life do you most sense the Holy Spirit at work?

Practical Application:

Before you begin your day, pause and pray specifically that the Holy Spirit would lead you into one conversation, one act of service, or one moment of encouragement that makes heaven more visible to someone near you.

Day 2: You Are a Stone in the Wall

Reading: Ephesians 2:19–22

Devotional:

Every stone in a historic wall was hand-shaped and uniquely placed by a master mason. No two were identical, yet together they formed something immovable and beautiful. This is exactly how God sees the church. You are not a generic piece in a generic structure. You are a specific stone, shaped by your story, your gifts, your wounds, and your calling, placed by a master who knows precisely where you belong.

The danger is believing that your uniqueness disqualifies you from belonging. The truth is that your uniqueness is the very reason you are irreplaceable. A wall built with identical stones has no strength. God builds with variety on purpose.

Reflection: What unique experiences, gifts, or qualities has God shaped into your life that could serve the people around you?

Practical Application:

Write down three specific qualities, experiences, or gifts that make you who you are. Then write the name of one person in your church community who might benefit from what God has placed in you. Reach out to that person this week.

Day 3: The Mortar That Holds the Wall Together

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:4–8

Devotional:

Stones without mortar are just a pile of rocks. They may look impressive stacked together, but the first storm will scatter them. The mortar that holds the church together is not shared theology alone, not common culture, not even shared history. It is love specifically, the gritty, enduring, non-sentimental love that Paul describes here.

This is not the love celebrated in greeting cards. This is the love that refuses to keep a record of wrongs. This is the love that chooses to believe the best about a person even when the enemy is working overtime to distort your perception of them. Without this love, every spiritual gift you carry amounts to noise. With it, the wall stands.

Reflection:

Which quality of love described in this passage is most difficult for you to consistently practice?

Practical Application: Choose one characteristic of love from this passage that you struggle with most. Write it on a card and place it somewhere visible. For the next three days, intentionally practice that specific expression of love in your closest relationships.

Day 4: Gifts Are for the Body, Not the Individual

Reading: Romans 12:4–8

Devotional: One of the most subtle lies the enemy plants in the church is the idea that your spiritual gift is primarily about you, your fulfillment, your platform, your calling. But Paul is relentlessly clear: gifts are given for the body. When you prophesy, you are not performing. You are building someone up.

When you serve, you are not doing chores. You are holding the structure together so others can do what they are called to do. When you give, you are not earning favor. You are releasing resources so the mission moves forward. Your gift only becomes fully alive when it is connected to someone else's need. Isolated gifts are incomplete gifts.

The Kingdom does not need more platforms. It needs more people who say, without condition or negotiation, "Here I am. Send me." Let your encounter with God be the source of your yes.

Reflection:

Is there someone in your community whose gift you have undervalued or overlooked? How might you affirm and encourage them this week?

Practical Application: Identify one person in your church whose gift has blessed you and tell them specifically how. Then identify one way you can offer your own gift in service to someone else before the week is over.

Day 5: Fighting for Unity Is Fighting for the Kingdom

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10

Devotional:

Unity is not the absence of conflict. Unity is the active, deliberate, costly choice to fight for connection even when division feels easier. Paul does not suggest unity. He urges it, in the name of Jesus Christ, as though the entire mission depends on it because it does. Division is not just a relational inconvenience. It is a kingdom crisis. Every crack in the mortar between believers is an opening the enemy will exploit.

Unspoken offenses, pride, unclear expectations, and unhealed wounds are not small things. They are the enemy's primary tools against the church. The bridge God is building through your community cannot carry the weight of its mission if the stones are pulling apart from one another. Fight for unity. It is worth the effort.

Reflection:

Is there an unspoken offense you are carrying toward someone in your church or close community? What would it look like to address it with honesty and grace?

Practical Application:

Set aside time today to pray specifically over your closest church relationships. Ask God to reveal any cracks of division that need addressing. If something comes to mind, take one concrete step toward reconciliation or honest conversation before the week ends. Then pray for your church's unity by name, asking God to make the love in your community a visible witness to the world around you.