



the
Bridge of Purpose

The Purpose Journey: Crossing the
Bridge of Purpose
A Study Guide

Introduction

We believe that the strongest marriages are those that have found a way to integrate seven foundational attributes of a healthy relationship. We like to call those attributes The Seven Bridges. Bridges help us get from where we are to where we want to go, and help us to avoid unnecessary obstacles. They connect two parts of a singular journey.

Relationships are also a journey. Along that journey there are many gaps, gorges, obstacles and other impediments. These obstacles make it more difficult to continue on that journey. Some of those obstacles are so challenging that many people give up before they reach their destination. Some couples just need a bridge in their relationship.

The Seven Bridges represent the relational characteristics of God found in a covenant relationship. God often describes his covenant relationship with his people as a marriage. A marriage that is thriving and exhilarating. By taking the time to understand the relational characteristics of God, we will begin to gain some insights into what a healthy relationship looks like. When we apply these attributes into our relationship with our spouse, and with God, we will start to experience the kind of relationship that only a perfect and almighty God can design. The Seven Bridges are:

The Bridge of Fellowship
The Bridge of Purpose
The Bridge of Celebration
The Bridge of Humility

The Bridge of Healing
The Bridge of Forgiveness
The Bridge of Patience

We cross a bridge one step at a time. Some bridges take longer than others. The goal is to have a clearly defined path where we can begin to move forward.

Journeys

We have developed a study guide for each of The Seven Bridges to help you more fully understand these relational characteristics of God. They are great for couples to explore together or for use in small groups. Each Journey has seven steps and will allow you to understand how these characteristics apply in a marriage. We hope that they will also help you develop a greater appreciation of the relationship God desires with you.



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Step One: What is Purpose?

What is my purpose? This is a question that has been asked throughout human history and one that everyone will ask themselves at some point in their life. We want to know why we are here and what we are called to do. Why is this so important? It is important because we want meaning in life. It is a common internal desire that God put in all of us. It draws us to him. Why? Because he is the only one that can answer it.

Deliberate Motivation

Read: Luke 7:30, Acts 20:27, and Ephesians 1:11

The Greek word for purpose in these verses is *Boule*, which also carries a meaning of counsel, decision, motive and plan. This word comes from the root word *Boulomai*, which means to will deliberately, have a purpose and to be minded.

God is motivated by his purpose and is deliberate in his actions. When we have a deliberate motivation, it allows us to have conviction. It better equips us to make tough choices.

Couple Discussion: What is God's motivation?

Couple Discussion: What motivates you individually and as a couple?

Advice

Read: Micah 4:12 and Proverbs 19:21

The Hebrew word for purpose and counsel in these verses is *'etsah*, which means counsel, advice or purpose. The concept of God's purpose providing advice and



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counsel to us is seen throughout scripture. Purpose provides us with the direction and guidance necessary to make wise decisions. In Proverbs 19:21, it says that the counsel of the Lord will stand. The Hebrew word for stand in this passage is *quwm*, which means to rise up, be fixed, established, persist and fulfilled. If that is the result of God's advice, why wouldn't we seek it?

Our purpose will also counsel and advise us as it influences our actions and decisions. It becomes a compass in our lives which guides us on our marriage journey.

Couple Discussion: How would recognizing God's purpose as being his counsel and advice impact your decisions?

Couple Discussion: As a couple, how do we seek God's advice and counsel in making our decisions?

Couple Discussion: If we looked back at our decisions over the past year, what would it reveal as the guiding advice and counsel of our purpose?

Reflection

Read: Romans 8:28 and 2 Timothy 1:8-9

The Greek word for purpose these verses is *Prothesis*, which means the setting forth of something and placing it in view. The root of this word is *Protithemai*, which means to set forth and expose something to public view and to set before or propose to one's self.

In Mark 2:26, *Prothesis* also used in reference to shewbread, which were twelve loaves of consecrated bread in the Temple that were laid on the Table of the



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Presence (Exodus 25:23-30 and Leviticus 24:5-9). Shewbread literally means "bread of the face" as it was bread that was laid out before the face or presence of God.

When we think of purpose as being exposed to public view, we begin to see it as a reflection of who we are. It begins to define us individually and as a couple.

Couple Discussion: What would others say our purpose is based on what our lives reflect?

Couple Discussion: What are some things that we would like our lives to reflect?

Step Two: Why is Purpose Important?

Reveals God's Will

Read: Ephesians 1:7-12 and Luke 22:42

Many people often ask, "What is God's will?" They want to know God's desire for them. In order to understand the mystery of God's will, we have to look to his purpose. The Greek word for will is *Thelema* which means what one wishes or has determined shall be done. This includes what God wishes to be done by us and the purpose of God to bless mankind through Christ.

In Luke 22:42, Christ was able to distinguish between his will (desire) and God's will (desire) in that moment of agony, because he knew God's ultimate purpose. It gave him clarity in the midst of what was becoming a chaotic and agonizing environment; allowing him to make a very difficult decision.

Couple Discussion: Do we have a difficult time understanding God's will?

Couple Discussion: How do we try to determine God's will?

Direction

When we know our purpose, it allows us to venture into new callings in life with confidence. It guides us in uncharted territory and lets us know our next steps.

Read: Luke 4:42-43

In Luke 4:42-43, we see Christ being accepted with praise by the local people of Capernaum, but he recognized the need to move on to other cities because he was sent for that purpose. How easy would it have been for Jesus to stay in that one

place and enjoy the praise of men? It was comfortable, particularly after having just been run out of Nazareth and nearly thrown off a cliff (Luke 4:16-30).

Couple Discussion: What are some areas in your life where you are comfortable and reluctant to change?

Couple Discussion: Do you tend to see your next steps with clarity or confusion? Why?

Strength

Read: John 12:27

We read in this chapter about Jesus foretelling his death. We begin to see him start the process of agonizing internally about his death which later comes to a climax in the Garden of Gethsemane. However, Christ knew his purpose and it gave him the strength to persevere during these most difficult times.

Couple Discussion: What has gotten you through some of the greatest challenges in your life?

Unity

Read: Philippians 2:1-2

Having a common purpose builds unity. It brings people together in fellowship and creates an atmosphere of joy. The Greek word for purpose in this verse is *Phroneo*, which is actually a verb and describes having understanding and wisdom through being of the same mind harmoniously. Couples that work together to determine



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their common purpose will grow closer and experience each other in a unique and intimate way.

Couple Discussion: How often do you and your spouse talk about your common purpose?

Couple Discussion: What are some areas that you and your spouse are not of the same mind? What impact does it have on your marriage?

Step Three: What Hinders Purpose?

Our Plans

Read: Proverbs 19:21 and Isaiah 49:4

In reading these verses, one could easily misinterpret that their efforts and plans are useless and decide to not make any plans. Plans are however an important step in carry out our desires. The challenge becomes when we get ahead of God in our plans and do not seek his counsel. If we fail to seek God's counsel and are not moving in the direction of his purpose, only then do our plans become useless.

Couple Discussion: Why do you think God wants to be involved as we develop our plans?

Couple Discussion: How do you currently make your plans and do you struggle knowing whether they fit within God's purpose?

Pride

Read: Luke 7:30

The Pharisees and interpreters of the Law did not accept God's purpose for them because they were too proud to accept that they needed to repent of their sins and be baptized by a man in the wilderness (John the Baptist). Their focus on their own desires and beliefs prevented them from recognizing the counsel and purpose of God.

Too often, we can become too caught up in what we want out of life and end up rejecting or not seeking God's counsel with a pure and willing heart. God wants to reveal his purpose for us, but he needs us to approach him with a willing attitude to



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accept that purpose regardless of our own desires. The unfortunate thing for the Pharisees is that they ended up rejecting the very Messiah they were looking for.

Couple Discussion: What are some ways we can be prideful towards God?

Couple Discussion: What are some ways we can be prideful towards our spouse?

Couple Discussion: How would you rate your willingness to accept God's purpose regardless of his calling? Why?

Human Nature

Read: Acts 5:37-39 and Romans 7:14-25

One of the challenges we all face as humans is fighting against ourselves. We all suffer from our own sinful nature and wage an internal battle between God's counsel and our own desires. This often creates an additional challenge for couples to understand their purpose since they not only have to discern their individual ideas, but also the ideas of their spouse. This can also be further complicated by each person's insecurities and feelings of inadequacy. Often times, God calls us into these difficult areas as a way of revealing his power and grace.

Couple Discussion: What are some ways that you struggle with your own desires?



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Couple Discussion: Why is it important to take the time to determine whether your plans are yours or God's?

Our Company

Read: Psalm 1:1-3

The company you keep will often influence your steps. People love to give their advice and God often competes with our closest friends. He also often speaks to us through others. The point is to be careful when you take the advice of others and to pray together as to whether or not this counsel is from God.

Couple Discussion: Which relationships do you have that encourage you to grow in your relationship with God?

Couple Discussion: How do we decide whether the counsel from others is good or bad?

Fear

Read: Exodus 14:10-14

The Israelites were scared of what the Egyptians might do to them if they were caught. Their fear could have prevented them from finding freedom and following the direction of God. Fear comes when we don't trust God's provision. Before we can move into the purpose God has for us, we have to trust him. We have to trust him with our finances, time, safety and relationships.



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Couple Discussion: What are your greatest fears?

Couple Discussion: How might the fears you have today impact your willingness to hear and accept God's purpose for you?



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Step Four: What Promotes Purpose?

Understanding

Read: Proverbs 20:5

The word for "plan" in this verse is *'etsah*, which we covered in Step One and means purpose, counsel and advice. Our purpose is already deep within each one of us. The challenge is finding how to bring it to the surface. If we take the time to grow in our spiritual understanding or wisdom, we will begin to bring forth our purpose. When we spend time studying God's word and praying, we will increase our ability to discern and respond to the promptings of God. It is at this point that our internal purpose begins to emerge and become active in our lives.

Couple Discussion: What are some ways that we can begin to grow more in our spiritual journey with God?

Couple Discussion: What are some ways that we can begin to grow more in our spiritual journey with each other?

Good Counsel

Read: Proverbs 15:22 and 20:18

Not only is good counsel important to obtain, but it is also important to seek counsel from more than one person. When we pray and obtain guidance from several people we trust, we will often begin to see a common thread emerge that will direct our steps. The final and most important counsel needs to be that obtained from God. Remember that good counsel will never contradict or compromise scripture.



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Couple Discussion: What are some ways we can seek counsel from God?

Couple Discussion: How would we rate the counsel we have received from others in the past? Who are the people whose counsel we value the most and what makes it valuable?

God's Word

Read: Isaiah 55:10-11

God's word is living and active. When we take the time to meditate on God's words, we will begin to feel the prompting of the Holy Spirit as God directs our steps. Our purpose is often revealed in those quiet moments when we are praying and meditating on God's word. Don't neglect the power of these moments in your life as God may be reaching out to you.

Couple Discussion: How would we rate our time spent meditating on God's word?

Couple Discussion: What are some ways we could meditate on God's word together?



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Worship

Read: Romans 8:28

We demonstrate our love of God through worship. We worship God through our actions, our songs of praise, and our prayers, among other ways. When we demonstrate our love and draw close to God, he will be able to work in our lives in unique ways. The Greek word for "called" in this verse is *kletos*, which carries a meaning of being divinely invited (such as to a banquet). When we show our love to God, he invites us along side his purpose. It is up to us to accept the invitation.

Couple Discussion: How do you worship God? What are some other ways you could worship him?

Couple Discussion: At what times do you feel closest to God?



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Step Five: How is Purpose Demonstrated by God?

Consistent

Read: Ephesians 3:10-11 and Hebrews 6:17

God's purpose is eternal. It has no beginning and no end. He is deliberate in his purpose, and as noted in Hebrews 6:17, his purpose is unchanging. This means that it is not compromised or minimized.

Couple Discussion: What in your life will not be compromised?

Couple Discussion: Why do you think it is important to have an unchanging/consistent purpose in your life?

Unwavering

Read: Jeremiah 23:20

When God determines his purpose, he does not stop until that purpose is accomplished. This requires conviction and underscores the importance in being sure of your purpose. When you're not confident in your purpose, you will be tossed around like the waves in the sea (James 1:5-7).

Couple Discussion: Why is it important to know that God will not waver in his purpose?



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Couple Discussion: How would you rate your confidence in your purpose? What would increase your confidence?

Foreknown

Read: Acts 2:23 and Ephesians 2:10

In the original Greek, it says that the handing over of Jesus was a "defined (*horizon*) purpose (*boule*)" God does not redefine or hesitate in defining his purpose for himself or you. He does not wait to see how things work out. Of course, God is omniscient and we are not. However, we can benefit from this in that he already has a purpose for us that we can seek.

Couple Discussion: What are the benefits of knowing your purpose sooner than later?

Couple Discussion: How does God having a foreknown purpose for you impact your decisions?

Planned

Read: Psalm 33:11, Isaiah 14:24, Isaiah 46:11 and Ephesians 1:11

Not only does God foreknow his purpose, but he has a defined plan to accomplish that purpose. While it is important to know your purpose, it is also important to have a God inspired plan in place for how you will live out that purpose. This plan



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should reflect the unique talents, skills and desires that God has given to you. As noted in Step Three, our plans can also hinder purpose, so it is important to not determine your plans ahead of your purpose.

Couple Discussion: Why is it important to have a plan to accomplish your purpose?

Couple Discussion: What are your talents, skills and desires?

Couple Discussion: In what ways are your talents, skills and desires complimentary to your spouse's talents, skills and desires?

Step Six: How is Purpose Demonstrated in Marriage?

Pray for Each Other

Read: 2 Thessalonians 1:11 and Colossians 1:9

God works in our lives through the prayers that we offer. Fulfilling our purpose often requires significant emotional and spiritual strength and the prayers of others to help us through challenging times are essential. Couples that pray for each other and with each other will find greater clarity and strength as they fulfill their purpose.

Couple Discussion: Do you know what your spouse would like you to pray for? How often do you talk about it with your spouse?

Couple Discussion: What are 10 things you would like your spouse to pray for you?

Encourage Each Other

Read: Colossians 2:2 and 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

One of the greatest things you can do as a husband or wife is to encourage your spouse. God modeled the need for encouragement by sending the Holy Spirit to serve as an encourager for each of us. We receive passion, strength and hope through the encouraging words and actions of our spouse. One of the key principles in offering comfort to others is to first allow God to comfort us. Once we experience his comfort, we will be empowered to offer that same comfort to our spouse.



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Couple Discussion: In what ways do you feel most encouraged by God?

Couple Discussion: In what ways do you feel most encouraged by your spouse?

Talk

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:10

Each couple has a unique joint purpose that God has set before them. When a couple recognizes this joint purpose, they will experience a greater level of intimacy and oneness. Couples need to take regular time to talk about their joint purpose and how God wants to use their marriage, so that they can be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Couple Discussion: How often do you and your spouse talk about your goals?

Couple Discussion: How would you describe your purpose as a couple?

Commit Plans to God

Read: Proverbs 16:3, 9

Once you have a plan to accomplish your purpose, it is important to commit it to God. He wants to be involved in our plans so that he can direct our steps, so that



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we will be successful. The Hebrew word for "commit" in Proverbs 16:3 is *galal*, which means to "roll together" and the word for "succeed" is *kuwn*, which means to be "stable or firmly established." These verses reveal that if we work with God to understand our purpose, then our purpose will be aligned with God's purpose. If you recall from Step Five, God's purpose is unwavering and will be firmly established. When he directs our steps, we can move forward in confidence that we will succeed in accomplishing our purpose. When you work together with your spouse as you commit your plans and purpose to God, your marriage will also become even more firmly established.

Couple Discussion: How would you rate how well you and your spouse "roll together" your plans and purpose with God? What are some ways you could improve?



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Step Seven: Steps to Purpose

Be Still and Listen

Read: Psalm 37:7 and Psalm 46:10

When we take time to be still and quiet our spirit, we allow ourselves to hear *God*. Too often, couples get so busy that they forget to take time to just rest and listen. It is during these moments of quiet meditation that *God* is able to fill our minds with his vision for our lives.

Couple Discussion: How good are we at taking time to be still and quiet?

Read: John 21:3-6

One can imagine the quietness on that boat with the disciples. After a night of not catching any fish, there was probably not much conversation. However, they were able to hear Jesus call out to them and take his advice. It is often in those times of discouragement that we will hear *God* if we have the willingness to listen. It is also not uncommon that in those times he asks us to step out in faith so that we will recognize him.

Couple Discussion: Do you feel like you are able to hear *God*? What are some things you could do to allow yourselves to hear him more clearly?

Couple Discussion: Talk about a time you stepped out in faith and saw *God* at work?



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Cry Out

Read: Psalm 57:2

There are times that we just need to get on our knees and cry out to God for direction. We need to have a passionate desire to know our purpose and a willingness to do whatever it takes to pursue it.

Couple Discussion: What do you really want to accomplish for the Kingdom of God individually and as a couple?

Seek Righteousness

Read: Philippians 2:12-18 and 2 Timothy 2:20-22

When we seek righteousness, we will be drawn closer to God and will begin to hear God more clearly. Sin separates us from God and makes it difficult for him to guide us in our purpose. This requires a confession of the sin in our lives, asking forgiveness and a willingness to turn away from that sin.

Couple Discussion: How would you currently describe your spiritual walk and closeness with God?

Couple Discussion: What are some ways you could pursue righteousness and draw closer to God?



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Be Diligent

Read: Proverbs 21:5

Getting comfortable with your purpose often requires great diligence and patience. It is commonly said that those that are successful fail more often than they succeed. You may not fully understand your purpose immediately. It may require a path of challenges that prepare you for what God has planned for you. Your diligence during this period of development will be crucial to your success.

Couple Discussion: What are some passions we have where we have been discouraged in the past?

Couple Discussion: How well do you handle set-backs? What could help you handle them better?

Conclusion

Purpose can be summed up as a reflection of the counsel of God in your life as he directs your steps towards his divine calling for you individually and as a couple to accomplish his will. When you determine your purpose individually and as a couple, and begin to work in concert with God, you will be drawn closer to him and closer together as a couple.

There are many things that prevent us from determining or accepting our purpose whether it is our plans, pride, fear or other influences in our life. However, when we are willing to humble ourselves before God and meditate on his word and counsel, we will begin to understand our purpose.

God made each one of us in a unique way (Psalm 139: 13-16) to work with him to accomplish his purpose of bringing humanity into a relationship with him for eternity. We hope this study will help guide you along your journey as you cross the Bridge of Purpose.



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SEVEN BRIDGES