"The *JOY* Factor" in Relationships
Read Hebrews 13:1-18

Once upon a time 2 brothers lived on same hill. For 40 years they enjoyed a great relationship. They used same tractor, tools, and farmed together. A small misunderstanding came between them and eventually became great conflict. There were weeks of silence.

One day a knock came at the door of the older brother. A man with a toolbox stood at the door. "I'm looking for a few days work" He said. Do you have anything I can do? "Why yes, I do" said the brother. My neighbor, who is my brother, lives in that farmhouse. We have had a big split come between us. Last week there was a meadow between my brother's land and mine. He bulldozed it and now there's a creek. I'll show him. Just go out there and build a high fence and I won't have to see him or his place. The stranger said, "Okay, I understand."

So the older brother helped him get wood and other supplies together. He had to go into town to shop for the day. The carpenter went right to work, measuring, sawing, & nailing, doing the job done as neatly as he could. The older brother came back that evening - he looked, and couldn't believe his eyes. There was no fence there, but a Bridge – across the creek to the other brother's land.
The younger brother saw it - came across with his hand reached out and said, "You're quite a fellow, to build this bridge after all I've said and done to you." Once separated, now they were together.

The older brother said to the carpenter, why don't you come in and make yourself at home and stay over for the night. I have many more projects for you to build. The carpenter said, "I'd love to stay on, but I must be on my way. I have many more bridges to build."

Building fences or building bridges has to do with Relationships.

Today's verses have to do with Relationships;
V1 *"Keep on loving each other"* has to do with – church relationships
V3 *"Remember those in prison"* has to do with – our relationship with people of the world.
V4 *"Marriage should be honored"* – our relationship to our spouse
V5 *"Keep your lives free from the love of money*". our relationship to money.
V7 *"Remember your leaders"* – our relationship to ones who have died in the faith.
V9 *"Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings"* – our relationship to true faith
V16 *"And do not forget to do good and to share with others"* – our relationship to ones in need
V17 *"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority*" – our relationship to leadership in the church.

"The JOY Factor" stands for **J**esus – **O**thers - **Y**ou
A- Our First and most important relationship is with Jesus
B- Our Second and next important relationship is with other.
C- Our Third and next important relationship is with our self.
Today, let's consider our relationship to **others** – in the Body of Christ.

As people - we are building Fences or Bridges.
The word, "Bridge" is not found in the Bible.
The words Fence and Walls are found many times = fortification – bulwark or stockade.
The word "Bridge" = viaduct – link or association.

Have you ever had a temptation to build a fence or wall between you and another - like the two brothers?
Maybe little differences – words – clash of opinions – a sharp re-action – a look ☹ - avoiding them???

Sometimes those walls we build are movable – moving in little by little.
We try to move our walls in on others trying to maximize our space and minimize there's.

Illus, in old Roman days prisoners were placed in a room with retractable walls – inch by inch they were moved in – eventually touching the skin – the next day – the sound of bones cracking.
It's possible to try to close in the walls on others – destroying them.
Or sometimes we build the walls high enough to just get them out of sight.

* Wall building primarily motivates us to protect ourselves.
*Bridge building motivates us to help others.

* Wall building focuses on hoarding what we have accumulated.
*Bridge building focuses on sharing what God has entrusted to us.

* Wall building leads to a life - sealed off, ingrown, shriveled.
*Bridge building leads to a life - unleashed, and expanding.

* Wall building causes us to see others as a threat to our security, but worthy of our impressing them
*Bridge building causes us to see others as essential to our well-being, and worthy of our accepting them.
* Wall building greatly diminishes our usefulness to God.
*Bridge building enhances our usefulness to God.

Hebrews 13:1 tells us, *"Keep on loving each other as brothers"*
Eph 4:29 *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but* ***only what is helpful for building others up*** *according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*
Phil 2:3 *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility* ***consider others better than yourselves.****"*

Phil 2:4 *"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but* ***also to the interests of others****"*.

Satan is a Master-Builder of walls on this planet.

✝By contrast, our Heavenly Father is a Bridge-Builder. ✝
The Cross is a Bridge to make the way for us to be rescued from sin. Jesus never did build walls or fences bween anyone and Himself.

The Latin word for Priest is = Pontifex = "Bridge Builder."
Jesus is our High Priest = Bridge-Builder.

1 Peter 2:9 reads, *"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood."* (This means every believer is to be a **Bridge-Builder.** We are to never be fence or wall builders between us and another person. Walls divide and create barriers and divisions. Bridges bring together and keep communications open. This is true not only in churches, but also at home, in the work place, and even with our neighbors.

I challenge you to check you words, attitudes, and actions. How do people respond to your relationship with them? Are you a wall and fence builder, or are you a Bridge Builder?

Eph 2:14 *"For He (Christ) himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility."*

CHALLENGE FOR THIS WEEK;
Let Christ help you break down that wall between you and your spouse. Let Him help you build a bridge so that you can communicate with him or her as a husband or wife should.
Let Him help you demolish walls that have been built between you and that one at work, that one neighbor, or that one in the church that you have had words with and need to resolve your differences.

Find “The JOY Factor” meaningful and real in you life as you relate to others around you!

Pastor Wayne Beard.