



BUILDER: BRIDGES OVER OBSTACLES

Session 4

Session Objectives:

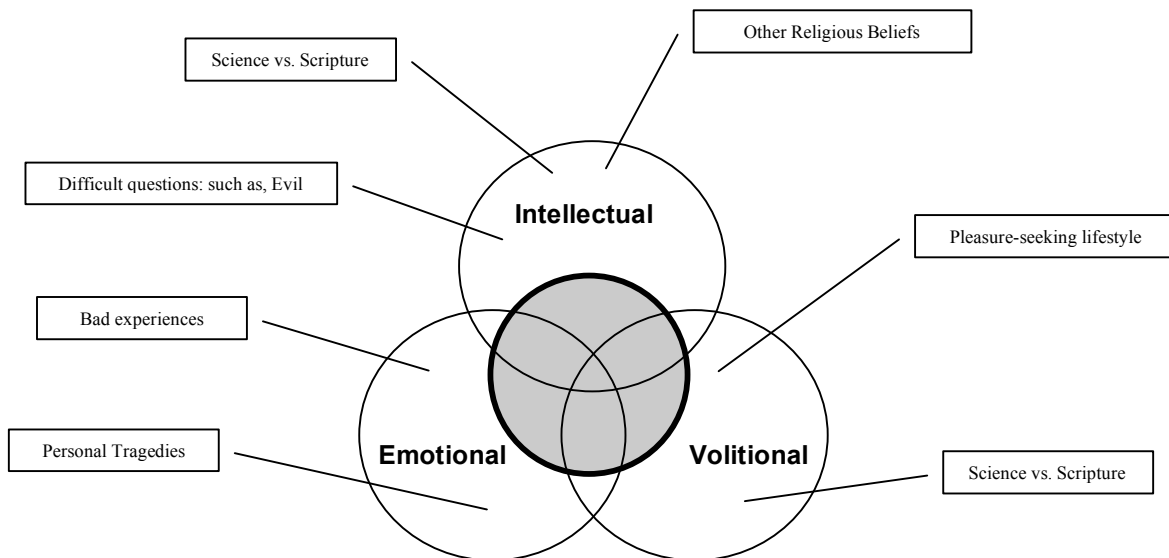
1. Understand the role of the Builder in others spiritual journeys.
2. Recognize the reality and diversity of obstacles in spiritual journeys.
3. Understand the importance and principles of bridge-building.
4. Identify an acquaintance that is stuck spiritually and take a step to provide a bridge.

Section 1: Sharing

Lead a time of sharing thoughts from the weeks devotionals found in *Passages: A Devotional Journey* and any reports from significant spiritual conversations.

Section 2: Caution: Obstacles ahead

Draw a circle [representing a person on a spiritual journey] surrounded by three interlocking circles. Label them for different kinds of issues: Intellectual, emotional and volitional. Brainstorm examples of each (a few examples are below).



The challenge for the builder is not knowing the right answer or response to each issue. Rather, it is to know the principles that apply no matter what the issue.

Section 2: A Model Bridge Builder

Acts 17:16-34

Read the text together, by section, discussing the following questions:

What were the Athenians obstacles? [16-21]

- ▶ Idols
- ▶ Philosophy
- ▶ Laziness
- ▶ Followed Fads

Where did Paul begin? [22,23]

- ▶ Recognized their religious inclinations.
- ▶ Their altar to an unknown God.

Where did Paul end? [31]

- ▶ Need for repentance
- ▶ Coming judgment of all idolatry
- ▶ Judge appointed
- ▶ Proof of the resurrection of Jesus

How did he connect the two? [24-30]

- ▶ Proclaim the unknown God
- ▶ Creator, ruler, life-giver, greater than creation
- ▶ Our purpose is to seek and find God
- ▶ Our views of God are wrong

What was the result? [32-34]

- ▶ Some sneered
- ▶ Some were curious and wanted more
- ▶ Some believed and followed

The key principle: An effective bridge begins where the person is at, ends with Jesus and connects the two effectively.

Section 3: The Art and Science of Building

Review: Just as...

An explorer has two primary tools: Listening and asking questions

A Guide has three: Christian community, your personal story, the gospel

The Builder has two primary tools: Prayer and God's Word.

If you are building a road and you come to an obstacle, you either remove it or you build a bridge over it.

Prayer

Prayer is essential because no matter what the issue looks like on the surface, it is ultimately a spiritual obstacle, used by the enemy to blind the eyes and keep in bondage [2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:1-3; 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5.]

Share an example of someone coming to Christ after a time of being prayed for by someone. (It could be your story.)

God's Word

God's Word is the second tool.

But how it is used is with ***Gentle Persuasion***. The two words together give a rich picture of what is needed.

Persuade:

the root of the word comes from per (thoroughly) and suadere (to urge), and is related to the Latin word: for sweet (suavis).

The picture is not of victory (winning a debate or argument), but of influence (urging a change.) It is attractive (sweet) not offensive.

Paul was persuasive [Acts 17:2-4.]

Gentleness

Gentleness is strength under control.

A gentle person is not a weak person. A gentle person is a safe person. (Think of a gentle stallion – powerful, but safe.)

People on spiritual journeys need gentle persuasion. They need us to come beside them, understanding where they are at, helping them over the issue or

Beginning point:

- Understand the issue. Explore and ask questions. It may sound like an intellectual issue (Why does God allow evil?), when in reality it is emotional (Why did this happen to me?)
- Let them know you understand and appreciate it. Don't minimize or make light of it.

Ending Point:

- Ultimately, this is about Jesus.
- Don't end up talking about peripheral matters [Churches, Christians, etc.]

Connect the Two

The most powerful connections include:

- The **Bible**: Share a verse and explain its implications to the issue.
- Your **Experience**: What has helped you related to this issue.
- **Questions**: Can you help them think differently about the issue?
- **Stories**: Is there a story they could relate with or an illustration they could understand?

Section 4: Examples of Bridges

Share personal examples of building bridges (or have others share their examples.)

Examples could include:

- Someone who is self-dependence
- Someone struggling with evil
- Someone struggling with pluralism (“all religions lead to the same place.”)
- Someone with a bad experience
- Etc.

Section 5 – Builder Resources

Share examples of recommended resources for builders:

Websites:

- Everystudent.com
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Books to Read

- Boyd & Boyd, *Letters From a Skeptic*
- Newman, *Questioning Evangelism*
- Sproul, *Reason to Believe*
- Torrey, *How to Bring Them to Christ*
-

Boods to loan or give-away. (It is normally better to loan something, than to give something. If you loan it, there is an expectation that they will read and return it. If you give it, they can get to it whenever it is convenient, and often it goes unread.)

- New Testament
- Strobel, *The Case for Faith & The Case for Christ*
- Stanley, *How Good is Good Enough*
- *The Life of Jesus/More than a Carpenter* combination book
-

DVD's or Videos

- *Jesus: Fact or Fiction*

Section 6 – Preparing to Build

Prayer

Con conversationally pray together through:

- 1 Peter 3:15
- 2 Timothy 2:23-26

Preparation

Choose a book, video or other resource to begin.

- What are the issues it is addressing?
- How is it doing it?
- For whom would this be effective?
- How could it be improved?