

OUTREACH TAKEAWAY # 6

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR CHRIST

If one wanted to describe the process of friendship or relational evangelism in a word picture, it could be likened to "bridge building." In this picture a bridge equals a relationship.

Someone has described the essence of life as relationships with people and the better those relationships are the more meaningful life can be. Each relationship with another person is like a bridge between two people over which words and actions and feelings travel.

Our focus in this article is on those bridges of contact which you have with people who do not know and confess Jesus as their Savior and/or those who are not presently involved and active in a Christian church. How many such contacts do you have in your neighborhood, at your place of work or at school, in your daily and weekly social contacts? Count them. You'll be amazed at how many there really are and at how easily you could multiply their number by just keeping your eyes and ears open!



Now focus your thoughts for a moment on just one of those relationships and think of it in terms of a bridge. Have someone in mind? Write down his or her name. Is the bridge of your relationship strong enough at this point to carry the Gospel, the Good News about Jesus over to that person? Or is it, perhaps, like a bridge you sometimes see pictured in a movie, a few rotten boards strung across an alligator infested river? Who is going to volunteer to walk over that kind of bridge with both hands occupied with treasure to be shared?

In most cases, our bridges to people who do not know or confess Jesus as their Savior will need to be strengthened by some sturdy planks so that Jesus can be shared in a non-threatening way. Some of those planks are prayer, loving and caring thoughts, words and actions. And not just any kind of love but AGAPE love, reflecting the perfect and unconditional love that God has shown us in Christ. It is going out of your way to be kind and helpful to people BECAUSE Jesus has gone all of the way to the cross for you! Such love builds bridges faster than any other way.

Bridges, of course, are never ends in themselves. No one builds a bridge over a river to simply look at it but to get to the other side. A bridge is a means to an end. So also building a bridge to an unchurched friend, relative, associate or neighbor does not have as its end a good and friendly relationship, worthwhile as that may be, but it has the loving end which seeks to offer an eternal beginning in Christ.

And the fact of the matter is that if you do a good and prayerful job of building a strong bridge, the person on the other side may venture out on the bridge and begin to ask you questions, like: "What makes you tick?" "Why are you so kind or helpful or generous toward me?" "How come you go to church every Sunday?" Such questions are most often and most easily asked by those with whom relationships exist. The stronger the relationship the more likely the questions will come. Then it will be natural for you to say: "Because of Jesus. Come and see!" God says: "In your hearts set apart Christ as lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have." (1 Peter 3:15)

As Christian witnesses, let us eagerly be about the task of building and strengthening our bridges to those who are without Christ so that we may carry the life-giving message of Jesus to many who are living and dying in this world without hope. God bless your calling to "build bridges for Christ."

-- James Radloff