

TWO WORLDS



BIG IDEA: Have you ever shared your faith with someone, but as you walked away, you felt you just didn't "connect" with the person? Did you feel your approach was awkward, irrelevant, or out-dated? Did you leave with a vague sense that you and the person were on two different wavelengths?

Your group members have probably experienced similar feelings and frustrations. As believers we all need to learn how to communicate our faith to effectively "connect" with our audience.

In this study, we'll look at Paul and Jesus and examine how they "connected" with a particular audience. We'll explore the principle of bridge-building.



DESIRED LIFE CHANGE: As a result of this study, your group should be able to: 1) begin recognizing barriers to effective communication, and 2) begin to learn how to build effective bridges for sharing Christ.



AUDIENCE: This lesson is designed for students who have begun to share their faith and desire to be more effective in evangelism.



LEADER'S PREPARATION: The student lesson is designed to be worked through in a group setting. Work through the entire study with the leader's guide, taking extra time to examine the biblical passages. John 4 and Acts 17 are used because they contain easily discovered principles of effective evangelism, even for young believers who have limited experience in evangelism and Bible study.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - WHY IS THIS STUDY IMPORTANT?



Effective evangelism changes lives. In order to be effective in sharing our faith, we must learn the art of building bridges to get into the non-Christian's world. This is accomplished in two ways: By developing a deeper understanding of the non-Christian audience, and by learning how to cultivate clear communication skills. It is also **crucial** to note that both of these **must** be undergirded with **God's power**.

If students feel awkward and "out-of-touch" in relating to the non-Christian world, they probably

won't feel very enthusiastic about sharing Christ. The result of this can be feelings of discouragement, fear of failure, or feeling intimidated. All of these can adversely affect a student's mindset for evangelism.

However, if they feel confident in their **understanding** of their audience, and if they feel competent in their **communication** skills, then they are more likely to be motivated to share Christ with others and have positive witnessing experiences.



AT A GLANCE

As your group interacts in this study, they will think . . .

This is my **WORLD:** My opinions vs. my generation's opinions of pop culture differ.

This is my **NEED:** The difference in world views creates obstacles in how to effectively communicate to others.

This is my **ANSWER:** Bridges can be built for effective communication (explore the models of Jesus and Paul).

This is the **DIFFERENCE:** Effective bridge building is a combination of understanding others and practicing clear communication, with both being undergirded by God's power.

This is what I'll **DO:** Seek greater understanding of the culture and develop more effective communication skills in relating to non-Christians.

For additional preparation tips and suggestions, see the **InterACTA POWERBOOK for Small Group Leaders.**

ASK: “What adjectives would you use to describe the following? What adjectives do you think most Christians would use?” (Have your group briefly share their responses with each other.)

STATE: “Now let’s examine some recent reviews of these.”

STATE: “Compare the responses in the two review boxes. You might notice some similarities, but you might observe some marked differences.”

There are two **contrasting** worlds: One of **Christians** and one of **non-Christians**. Many times we are ineffective in initially establishing **common ground** for communicating the gospel. The theme of this study is **bridge building** between both worlds. **Point out the definition of a bridge.**

ASK & DISCUSS BRIEFLY

ASK & DISCUSS

DISCUSS & SHARE AS A GROUP

InterACTA™ PERSONAL LIFE APPLICATIONS CONNECTIONS VERSION 1.2

TWO WORLDS

MY REVIEW

Arsenio Hall _____
 The Simpsons _____
 Red Hot Chili Peppers _____
 Basic Instinct _____
 Public Enemy _____
 Church _____

RECENT REVIEWS

Arsenio Hall - **sensitive, hip, politically correct, relational**
 The Simpsons - **sharp cultural insights, very current, like my family on the edge, good message, pioneering, attitude worth catching, great whodunit, pleases the picky**
 Red Hot Chili Peppers - **loud, challenging, controversial**
 Basic Instinct - **judgmental, waste of time, too much fund raising**

YOUR INPUT

In light of these two worlds, what are some possible obstacles to real and meaningful conversation? _____

Which of these obstacles are related to evangelism? _____

DEFINITION
 BRIDGE: A structure spanning and providing passage over an obstacle.
 (American Heritage Dictionary)

FOR ME:

I'll look foolish.
 I'll be a failure.
 I'm embarrassed.
 I'm afraid to witness.

FOR THEM:

They are lost and separated from Christ for eternity.

FOR THE RECORD

Largest Bridge - Main span of the Humber Estuary Bridge, Great Britain: 4,626 ft.
 Highest Bridge - Royal Gorge over Arkansas River in Colorado: 1,053 feet above the water.
 London Bridge - First built over the Thames River in 1209. Torn down and replaced 1826-1831. Replaced with third bridge in 1968. The second bridge is now in Lake Havasu City, Arizona.

YOUR EXPERIENCE

Describe a time when you experienced one of these obstacles...
 How did you feel?

How can you build effective bridges to share the gospel relevantly?

CONTEXT	TWO BIBLICAL MODELS	CONTEXT
The events in Acts 17 occur during the journey in which Paul first carried the good news to Europe. In Athens, Paul initiates with the people about Christ. After conversing with the philosophical society of the city, Paul is brought to the council of religious and educational affairs in Athens - the Areopagus - for him to present his teaching.	<p>Paul Acts 17:22-34</p> <p>Observation</p> <p>JESUS John 4:5-30</p>	John is written in order "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). The emphasis in the first four chapters is that the life Jesus offered was needed by all - whether disciples of John the Baptist (1:19-42; 3:22-36), Jews (1:43-2:25), Pharisees (3:1-21), Samaritans (4:1-42), and even a Roman official (4:43-54). The function of the "Woman at the Well" story is to illustrate the universal offer of spiritual life.
Communicated respect (v. 22). Demonstrated interest in their culture (v. 23). Stimulated interest (v. 23). Demonstrated knowledge of their culture (v. 28). Tactfully revealed their false beliefs (v. 29). Exposed their need for God (v. 30-31).	<p>Clues to understanding</p> <p>Examples of clear communication</p>	<p>Took the initiative (v. 7). Established a common ground - the need for water (v. 7). Crossed cultural barriers (v. 9) by talking to a woman, who was a Samaritan and a prostitute. Communicated acceptance. Created interest (v. 13). Surfaced her need (v. 16). Pointed her to a relationship with God (v. 24).</p>
Some sneered, some heard more, and some believed	Impact	Conversion

TRANSITION STATEMENT: “Bridge building can be a challenge.”

ASK

Read Acts 17.

LOOK FOR:

- Clues for how Paul and Jesus understood their particular audience.
- Examples of clear communication skills that each utilized.
- The bridge-building methods used in communicating the gospel.

Have them **write** in their observations and **share** them with the group, then have them do the same with the passage in John 4.



TRANSITION STATEMENT:

“From the previous models, we observe this key principle.”



READ: “Effective bridge building combines understanding others and clear communication undergirded by God’s power.”



STATE: “Let’s look at how Chuck Colson attempted to connect with a non-Christian friend.”

Read the excerpt aloud as a group. Underline Chuck’s attempts to build a bridge to his friend’s world. **ASK**



ASK: “Which proved most effective? Why?”

PRINCIPLE
Effective Bridge Building Combines Understanding Others & Clear Communication
God's View | World's View
Undergirded by God's Power

THOUGHTS
How does Jesus, the Son of God becoming a man, demonstrate God's effective bridge building to us? (Just for them to reflect on.)

What would bridge building look like today?

Chuck Colson and Tom
Some months ago, a well-known media figure invited me to dinner. “Come talk to me about God,” he said. Soon my friend (we’ll call him Tom) was sitting across from me in a posh New York restaurant. I had no clue to the tough intellectual battle that was brewing. “I don’t believe in God,” Tom told me straight out. “But I’d like to hear what you have to say.” He was trying to maintain his newsmen’s cultivated air of cynicism, but his eyes were eager. He was obviously searching. I started telling my testimony, but Tom cut me off. “I know your story,” he said. “obviously Jesus worked for you.” And he told of a friend who was into New Age spirituality. “Crystals, channeling—it worked for her,” Tom beamed. “Just like your Jesus!” No, no, I tried to explain. Jesus is a historical person who actually lived and died. But Tom shrugged it off; his friend’s guru is a real person, too. So I switched gears. Tom had suffered health problems, surely he had wondered about death and the after-life. But again he cut in. “Heaven is a myth invented in primitive times,” he declared. “Today we know humans are just another species of animal. When they die, that’s the end.” I switched to Scripture, but Tom held up his hand. “I’ve studied the Bible,” he said, “wonderful collection of ancient fables.” I offered arguments for the Bible’s historical validity, but Tom wasn’t buying. “Some parts might be historical,” he acknowledged, “but no intelligent person today can believe in miracles.” By now I had been working (that’s the only word for it) nearly an hour without finding a chink in Tom’s armor. As I fumbled with my fork, an idea popped to mind. “Have you seen Woody Allen’s movie *Crimes and Misdemeanors*?” “Yes, he had. It’s about a doctor who hires a killer to murder his mistress. Afterward he is haunted by guilt. His Jewish father had taught him that God sees all, and will surely bring justice. But the doctor’s crime is never discovered. Eventually he quells conscience by deciding that in the “real world” there is no justice; that life is nothing but a Darwinian struggle where the ruthless come out on top. “When we do wrong, is that the only choice?” I asked Tom. “Either live tormented by guilt—or kill our conscience and live like beasts?” For the first time, Tom was thoughtful, picking at his food. I went on to Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, where the central character, Pierre, wrestles with his conscience, crying out, “Why is it that I know what is right, but do what is wrong?” That led to C. S. Lewis’s argument for natural law. And then to Romans, which teaches that try as we might, we cannot run from the voice of conscience. Though he said he wasn’t ready to make a decision, Tom listened intently as I told of Christ’s atoning work to take away our guilt. I don’t know what will happen to Tom, clearly the Hound of Heaven is after him. But I do know that without Woody Allen and Tolstoy and Lewis, I would never have found common ground with him to discuss spiritual matters. From *CHRISTIANITY TODAY*, November 9, 1992. © 1992. Reprinted with permission of Prison Fellowship, P.O. Box 17500, Washington, DC 20041-0500.

What were Chuck’s different attempts to build a bridge?

ATTEMPTED BRIDGES	RESULTS / WHY
Testimony	No Connection
History	No Connection
Death / Afterlife	No Connection
Scripture	No Connection
Books / Movies	Connection!

How can I become relevant and an effective bridge builder?

YOUR INPUT
What was it about Chuck Colson that made him relevant?

RELEVANT BY:
Talking in their world, showing understanding and compassion.



TRANSITION STATEMENT: “What we see from the models of Paul and Jesus and from Chuck Colson is that we need to build bridges to open up effective communication to the gospel.”

The “Closer Look” section will be done in two steps.

In **STEP ONE**, you will have your group discuss the values, priorities, and needs of the people they are trying to reach.

In **STEP TWO**, you will use the information you discovered in STEP ONE to discuss ways to build bridges that connect both worlds.

We need to move from understanding their need to communicating to their need.

The goal is to demonstrate genuine interest in others and point them to the gospel.

NOTE: You can choose either model to work through. Jesus’ taking the initiative in a lifestyle situation with an individual or Paul’s taking the initiative in a strategic situation with a group.

PRINCIPLE
Effective Bridge Building Combines Understanding Others & Clear Communication
God's View | World's View
Undergirded by God's Power

What can I learn from ...

JESUS' MODEL ... with an individual
Understanding Others | Clear Communication

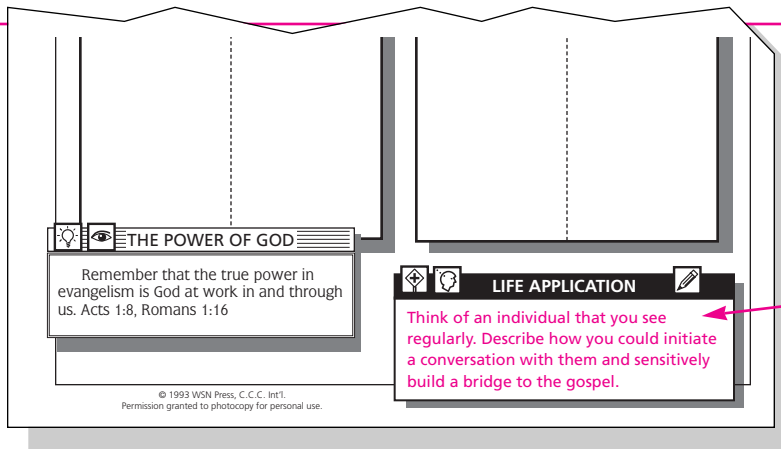
PAUL'S MODEL ... with a group
Understanding Others | Clear Communication

STEP ONE
Understanding Others

STEP TWO
Clear Communication

What are their . . .
Values? Needs? Priorities? Desires?
What do students talk about?
How do they spend their time?

Using the information from step one, discuss ways to initiate a conversation, listen with understanding, and build bridges to the gospel.



REMEMBER: This study is designed to help students build effective bridges to gain a hearing for the gospel, not to teach them a structure for presenting the gospel.

LIFE APPLICATION: Have them write, "Think of an individual that you see regularly. Describe how you could initiate a conversation with them and sensitively build a bridge to the gospel."

LEADER'S RESOURCE

ADDITIONAL HELP: To the right is a sample conversation that refers to the "Closer look" section on the previous page. This example is designed to help you facilitate your group's discussion, especially in the "Clear Communication" box.



BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Tell It Often, Tell It Well – Mark McCloskey

The Body – Chuck Colson

Choosing My Religion – R.C. Sproul



TOPIC CONNECTIONS

Related *InterACTA* small group studies: *Motivation for Ministry, Lostness of Man,* and *Spirit-Filled Life – God's Power.*

Understanding Others

Values, Priorities, and Needs. Students feel pressure and experience anxiety related to exams and grades in general.

Clear Communication

Door Opener (Ask a question.)	"How's it going with your classes, exams and stuff."
Student Response	"I'm feeling a lot of stress from the papers, exams and deadlines."
Listen and Respond	"I know what you mean. What's the main stress point for you right now?"
Student Response	"I don't know . . . I don't think I've ever really learned how to study for a test and it's a little late to learn now!"
Listen and Respond	"I hit that point last semester and was I frustrated! I got a book, <i>How to Get Better Grades and Have More Fun</i> , and it really helped. I could xerox a copy of one of the most helpful chapters for you if you'd like me to." [Sure!]
Listen and Respond	"Hey you know I've discovered something else that has really made a difference in how I handle stress. I would love to tell you about it if you have a few minutes." [OK]
Build a Bridge	"I hit some pretty tough times last year and I started thinking seriously about life. I even started thinking about God and what I believe."
Share the Gospel	"Let me tell you my story . . . Have you ever seen this four point outline . . ."

OVERVIEW OF MEETING TIME



Planning your group session

Allocating your time

	INTERACTION AS A GROUP	INTERACTION WITH THE STUDY & WORD	INTERACTION WITH GOD	UPCOMING INFORMATION	OTHER IDEAS
	Ice breaker? Refreshments?	Provided. Add personal story?	Worship / Praise / Prayer time?	Next meeting? Special event?	Music / Video?
	_____ minutes	_____ minutes	_____ minutes	_____ minutes	_____ min.