

Obstacles

COJOURNERS № 4.1 | BUILDER

Obstacles such as intellectual issues, emotional baggage or a lack of desire cause many people to get stuck in their spiritual journeys. What they need is someone to build a bridge that helps them over the obstacle. But first, we need to identify and understand the issues.

Discuss

- Brainstorm a list of common obstacles that keep people from Christ. Be specific.
- In your opinion, what are the three most common obstacles on your list?
- Read 2 Corinthians 4:4 and 10:4, 5. What insights do these verses provide about obstacles?
- What other verses give insights into dealing with spiritual obstacles?

When a person is spiritually stuck, rarely is there just one issue. Normally there is a cluster of issues that together make a seemingly insurmountable barrier. Whatever a person's obstacles may be, remember they are ultimately spiritual issues. Therefore, the first response should be prayer.

Action Plan

Consider those whose spiritual journeys you have begun to enter or explore. What obstacles have you become aware of? Take time to conversationally pray for spiritual breakthroughs in their lives.

Summary

Though there are many obstacles that keep people from Christ, they are all spiritual.



Beginning to Build

COJOURNERS № 4.2 | BUILDER

When a person comes to an obstacle on their path, they need a bridge to help them get over it. Spiritually, it's the role of the builder to provide such a bridge.

The place to begin is by understanding a person's issue. There are three elements to a good beginning in bridge building:

1. Understand the issue and know why it's important. Good questions will help you, such as, "What is it that keeps you from considering Christ?"
2. Let the person know you understand the issue. Express your understanding so she knows you have heard her. "What I hear you saying is..."
3. Affirm the significance of the issue. He needs to know you consider the issue significant as well. "I see what you mean. I don't want to minimize what

you're saying, but can I share something that has helped me?"

When you affirm a genuine understanding of an issue it brings you beside the person, rather than against them, as in a debate. It places you in position to help them overcome the obstacle, if they are willing.

Action Plan

Try it out. Break into groups of threes. Have one person take the role of someone who is spiritually stuck. Let another try to understand the issue conversationally, while the third observes. After each has had a turn, discuss the approaches. What was best? What suggestions do you have?

Summary

Bridge building begins with understanding.



Master Builder

COJOURNERS № 4.3 | BUILDER

Jesus was the master when it came to building bridges to help people on their spiritual journeys. But he didn't always use the same bridge. Nor did he always have the same results.

Read John 4:1-26.

- What obstacles stood in the way of the Samaritan woman's journey to God?
- How did Jesus deal with them?

Now read Mark 10:17-23.

- What obstacles were in the way of this young man?
- How did Jesus seek to help the young man overcome his issues?

Now compare the two incidents and the results.

- What insights do you gain?
- What principles of building bridges can you learn from Jesus?

Action Plan

Take time this week to re-read the two incidents above. Meditate on how Jesus sought to help each person. Ask God to make you an effective bridge builder. Remember, we can provide a bridge and encourage someone to continue on, but ultimately the decision is up to the individual.

Summary

Jesus is the best model of a bridge builder.



Gentle Persuasion

COJOURNERS № 4.4 | BUILDER

When people are stuck on their spiritual journey, they need help to think differently about the issue. That is the role of gentle persuasion. Your experience can help them. What has helped you think differently?

There are three common bridges.

1. The Bible—What verses speak to this issue?
2. Questions—Is there a way you can frame the issue differently by asking another set of questions?
3. Stories—Is there a story or an illustration that will help the person see the issue in another way?

Discuss

- Identify a common obstacle that keeps people from coming to Jesus.
- What verses speak to the issue? What questions can you use to reframe the issue? What story or illustration could be used?

Action Plan

Review the obstacles you have identified in conversation with others. Try to think of an appropriate bridge you could use next time someone brings up each issue.

Summary

Gentle persuasion helps you build bridges for others who are stuck.

