

Building Bridges to People of Other Religions

MISSION OBJECTIVES

- A. I will ask effective questions that will help me listen to and understand people's needs, values, and beliefs.
- B. I will draw closer to people of other religions by affirming the areas we have in common.

TEAM CARE AND ACCOUNTABILITY (20 Minutes)

1. Tell us about your one-day retreat. In what ways do you feel it helped you and what did you learn?
2. What other experiences have you had in following up on your cross-cultural friendships. (Keep using and referring to your *Contact Log*).
3. What did you learn from study #5 in *My Favorite Missionary* and the video clips?
4. What needs or challenges are you facing that we can pray for?
5. Pray together, especially for each other and the friends from other cultures whom you have met.

PRESENTATION (17:06 Minutes)

Watch: *Building Bridges to People of Other Religions*. Take notes using the following outline.

1. Four steps for witnessing to people of other religions:
 - 1) (a)_____.
 - 2) Affirm (b)_____.
 - 3) Share (c)_____ through (d)_____.
 - 4) Invite to (e)_____.
2. "(a)_____ with the people on every point where you can consistently do

so. Let them see that you love their souls, and want to be in (b)_____ with them so far as possible. If the love of Christ is revealed in all your efforts, you will be able to (c)_____ the seed of truth in some hearts; God will water the seed sown, and the truth will spring up and bear fruit to His (d)_____”
(*Evangelism* 140).

3. Areas of the first angels’ message that have similarities with other world religions:

4. “The term ‘Babylon’ is derived from ‘Babel,’ and signifies (a)_____. It is employed in Scripture to designate the various forms of false or apostate (b)_____” (*The Great Controversy* 381).

5. Areas of the second and third angels’ messages that have similarities or points of contact with people of other world religions:

DISCOVERY AND DISCUSSION (35 Minutes)

1. What are your thoughts and feelings after hearing *Building Bridges to People of Other Religions*?
2. The Gospels record Jesus asking over one hundred questions. People like to be asked questions and have someone listen to their answers with true concern and interest. How can you tell from the eyes, posture, and words that someone is really listening (remember it can be different in various cultures)?

3. Listening is the best first step in witnessing because you can learn the person's values, beliefs, and needs. This will enable you to care and share in a relevant way. In groups of two, practice listening well as you ask your partner one or two of these questions. Make sure both of you ask and answer:
- A) What do you most appreciate of the **values** your parents lived and taught?
 - B) What **beliefs** and practices are especially important to you in your religion?
 - C) What challenges are you facing in your life right now (**needs**)?
4. Individually choose one of the five scenarios below and imagine that you have just asked the three questions above to the person in the scenario. Read the description and write down his or her **values**, **beliefs**, and **needs**.

(Make sure that the members of your team choose different scenarios from each other).

1. Animist Tattoo Artist

Teng is Hmong from the mountains of Laos in Southeast Asia working in Oroville, California as a tattoo artist. He often wears strings wrapped around his wrists. He explains to his friends, "We are a very close-knit community. The elders in my tribe put them on me and blessed me. This protects me from bad spirits." He complains about how expensive Hmong weddings and funerals are: "We have to make sure we do all the rituals just right, so we don't have problems with evil spirits. Of course, we also have to make everybody happy with good food and lots of it!" He frequently talks about the movies and television programs that he likes to watch. Most of them deal with magic, witches, and spirits. "These things are real," he says, "But most people think they are just pretend." He has two sons he loves very much. "I can't imagine if anything bad ever happened to them," he tells you. "Their school is not safe. I worry about them whenever they are out of my sight."

Values:

Beliefs:

Needs:

2. Buddhist Monk

In the mall in Adelaide, Australia every week there is a Buddhist monk named Suphaap. He asks for donations to help his monastery pass on the *dharma*, or words of truth. He tells people that his beliefs are very simple. Life is full of suffering and suffering comes because we want things. We desire what is bad, and it messes up our lives. We want what is good, but nothing lasts forever. That's why we suffer. Suphaap has done all he could to get rid of his desires, bad and good. He gave away all his possessions, chose to be single, and stopped eating each day by noon. He spends his time doing good works and meditating on what he calls the "true reality." This, he tells you, is the way to find peace. Suphaap is overweight and does not feel very good. In fact, he has diabetes and has not been able to lose weight because of all the delicious meals people feed him as part of earning merit for themselves. He really wants to become a vegetarian, but he finds it too difficult.

Values:

Beliefs:

Needs:

3. Hindu Apartment Manager

Aarushi immigrated years ago to England from northeast India. She manages the community programs for a chain of apartment complexes. She loves vegetarian cooking shows and she says she does not eat meat because she believes in reincarnation and does not want to destroy any life and have it affect her with bad karma in a future life. At her house, she has a shrine that includes an image of a god that looks like a mythical elephant. Aarushi worships this Hindu god, Ganesh, hoping she will be blessed enough to own her own apartment complex someday. Prayer is an important part of her life, and she asks for help before she does any new business venture. She knows that the picture of Ganesh is just a symbol of his power and his desire to bless those devoted to him. She says that although there are many gods in India, they really are all one. In fact, everything is one, and our duty is to enter into that harmony. Though she is very busy, it is still important to her to go to the temple and offer incense and various gifts, seeking blessing and protection. Aarushi admits, "In my busyness I am often

impatient with my tenants. They are so careless with the apartments that I have several times lost my temper and then lost my customers. I have to find a way to cool down my heart.”

Values:

Beliefs:

Needs:

4. Jewish Tourist

Azarel is a Jewish tourist visiting Yosemite National Park in California. He is quite devout in his religious practice and is headed out of the park on Friday to find a city where there is a synagogue so that he can enjoy the Sabbath. He has been having a hard time finding places to eat because he must have kosher food. Azarel is in the United States visiting his children and grandchildren, whom he loves very much. He is disturbed that while most of his family members still follow the traditions they grew up with, one of his sons no longer believes in God. He and his son have not spoken for six years because of a serious argument. “Our traditions are important,” he says. “Our laws are essential, but it is the knowledge of Adonai, the Creator God, that matters most.” Azarel mentions his concerns about the hostility between Jews and Muslims and wishes that everyone could just live in peace. “Maybe that’s why my son doesn’t believe anymore,” he wonders sadly. “There is too much fighting between religions, but what can we do?”

Values:

Beliefs:

Needs:

5. Muslim Couple

Mudaser and M'saom are a Muslim couple living in Vancouver, British Columbia. She always wears a head covering. He often also dresses in a traditional outfit. When he talks about his religion he emphasizes that he believes in one God who created everything and is the only true God. He prays five times a day and fasts at Ramadan. He does not eat pig or drink alcohol. Mudaser says, "We are living in the time of the end and that everyone should listen to what the prophet Mohammad taught about being prepared for the last days. I think everyone should live their life surrendered to this one true God." Mudaser and M'saom always offer tea to their guests and usually convince them to stay for a wonderful lunch of flat bread and curry. One day M'saom confides, "I have not told almost anyone else, but my husband lost his job and our credit cards are maxed out. I don't know how we are going to pay the rent."

Values:

Beliefs:

Needs:

5. After listening to people, we want to communicate warm care. What we say can open or shut the door to more conversations. Why does affirming our similarities open the door for the gospel?

6. While you may or may not feel comfortable affirming anything about someone's religion, there are likely some important values that they hold which you can affirm. Similarities draw us together and make our relationships strong enough to discuss differences. Read these examples:
 - A) I love how your culture **values** being at peace with everyone.
 - B) I also **believe** there are things we cannot see that are real.
 - C) I too struggle to forgive my enemies (**need**).

Write similar sentences that you could use to respond to the person in the scenario you chose, affirming a value, a belief, and a need.

Your scenario:

A)

B)

C)

7. Share in twos or with your group about the person in your scenario and how you would affirm what you have in common.

ASSIGNMENTS (5 Minutes)

1. What have you learned today and how will you use it this week?
2. What do you plan to do to follow up on any of the friendships you have developed?
3. Visit the place of worship of another religion like a temple, synagogue or mosque. Fill out *Field Activity-Worship and Beliefs* and be ready to share your experience with your team.
4. Mobilize and Multiply. Share with a friend or family member what you learned about listening and affirming areas that we have in common with people of other religions. Encourage him or her to join you as you visit a temple, synagogue or mosque.
5. Watch at least one of the following video clips (check online for updates):
 - A) Elder Bryan Gallant shares the power of the gift of time; Mr. Luran Merginio tells about his experience in refugee ministry.
 - B) Elder Stephen Po tells what it was like to be a young refugee moving to America and how to help refugees thrive
6. Complete study #6 in *My Favorite Missionary* and focus your prayers on people of other "World Religions" in *Praying for the World Next Door*.
7. Complete the form: *Field Report #6*.

TEAM PRAYER (10 Minutes)

Pray together for God to give you divine appointments with people He is trying to reach; for Him to put a burden on your heart if there is a specific religious group He wants you to reach out to.

Promises to Claim:

- *Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:5-6).*
- *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God (2 Corinthians 3:5).*
- *When we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to cooperate with One who knows no failure” (Christ’s Object Lessons 363).*
- *Through much prayer you must labor for souls, for this is the only method by which you can reach hearts. It is not your work, but the work of Christ who is by your side, that impresses hearts (Evangelism 342).*