

Building Bridges to Unbelievers

The apostle Paul built bridges to his Gentile audience. For instance, he used the illustration of the rain from heaven and crops in their season given by the Creator God when addressing the farmers in Lystra. He also addressed the religious beliefs in Athens from the starting point of the altar to the unknown God. But what bridges do we have in contemporary, ultramodern European culture? Secular society has a very different world vision to the Christian one. This session will think through four possible bridges which may enable unbelievers to grasp the plausibility and credibility of the Christian faith.

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I. What does it mean to build bridges? Three examples from Acts.

II. What bridges do we have in Europe today?

1. Our common humanity : “the human condition”

A. Our human solidarity (Matthew 22.39)

B. Our human identity (Genesis 1.27)

C. Our human experience (Romans 8.29)

i. Conversion =

- a. the restoration of our relationship with God
- b. the restoration of the image of God in us
- c. the restoration of our relationships

2. The church, the new humanity

A. Ephesians

- i. Salvation (v8-9)
- ii. God's workmanship (v10)
- iii. The new humanity (v11-18)

B. "No-one has ever seen God"

- i. John 1.18 > John 14.9 / 2 Corinthians 4.4-6
- ii. 1 John 4.12 > John 13.35 / 1 Corinthians 12 / 2 Corinthians 3.2

C. "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15.7)

- i. Two consequences
 - a. The importance of relationships
 - b. Plausibility in each cultural context

3. Spirituality

A. Postmodern spirituality

- i. Well-being

- ii. Immediate and individual
- iii. Syncretistic and mystical
- iv. Only concerns this life

B. Biblical spirituality

- i. Salvation is at the centre
- ii. Relational
- iii. No sacred / secular divide

4. The story line of history

Creation > fall > redemption > “already but not yet” > eternity

A. Why do postmodernists not believe there is a story-line to history?

- i. “Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives” (Jean-François Lyotard)
- ii. Through ignorance
- iii. It’s a shocking claim

B. So why talk about the story-line of history?

- i. To present the Biblical view of history

- ii. To counter the idea “It’s my choice”
- iii. To defuse accusations of proselytism (the attempt to make converts)
- iv. To call to repentance (“a change of mind”)
- v. To keep the cross in the centre

III. Conclusion

1. Evangelism today is
 - i. a process
 - ii. within the context of relationships
 - iii. but attempting to have a certain visibility in the public arena
2. “I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no-one can shut, because you have little power, and have kept my word, and have not denied My name” (Revelation 3.8)

Suggested Readings:

David BROWN *Passerelles* (Éditions Farel) IN FRENCH