

Build Bridges

Suggestions from Mark Copeland's book, *Relationship Evangelism*

Initial Contact is the 1st step to building a bridge

→ **Hopefully you already know the people on your list**

- don't have to start from scratch, like me - just moved
 - I don't know anyone on my flow chart, that live in this area
- people you already know, usually the best contacts

→ **What's this mean to you? — Practical Advice, Suggestions, Application:**

- use the contacts you've already developed, first, rather than starting from scratch

Become Better Acquainted is the 2nd step to building a bridge

→ **Goal:**

- become better acquainted — don't try to do more than this, at this point
- have fun, enjoy getting to know people — don't put pressure on yourself

→ **Suggestions:**

- Ask questions about them; e.g., where they are from, where they went to school, interests, family background, etc.
- Look for common interests.
- Be patient - don't force the relationship.
- Don't hide your Christianity; let your light shine early in the relationship (Matt. 5:14-16).
- Short, frequent contacts seem to be more effective than a few prolonged periods.
 - Pr. 25:17
- Listen for the other person's: desires, fears, aims, goals, burdens, needs (Phil. 2:3-4).
- Be complimentary (in all honesty) (Acts 26:2-3).

→ **Suggested activities:**

- **Around the neighborhood:**
 - Invite the neighbors in for dessert or dinner.
 - Game nights.
 - Recreational activities together.
 - Shopping.
 - Watching TV. go to movies.
 - Picnics or barbecues together.
- **At work & school:**
 - Eat lunch together.
 - Recreational activities together: golf, tennis, basketball, walking, etc.
 - Continued conversations while working.
 - Participate in their activities outside of work.
 - Business trips.
 - Attend meetings, seminars together.
 - Car pool.
 - After work activities.
 - Sports teams: bowling leagues, softball teams.

→ **What's this mean to you?**

- **What is important?** Do things with the prospects on your flow chart, to get to know them better, and to let them know you better.

Serving Them is the 3rd step to building a bridge

→ Principles to remember at this stage:

- **Expect opportunities** for service, and be alert for them.
- **Your goal is his (or her) success** in life.
- **Love is shown more by deeds** than by words (1 Jn 3:17-18).
- **Meet genuine, practical needs.**
- **Let them be of service to you as well**, and be appreciative.

→ Suggested activities:

- **Around the neighborhood:**
 - Volunteer to help with kids; e.g., baby-sit, provide transportation.
 - Take over desserts.
 - Take meals over during times of crisis (sickness, death).
 - Shovel sidewalk, mow lawn.
 - Help them with their home projects.
 - Help work on their car, computer, etc.
 - Cards, gifts on special occasions.
 - Be alert for emergencies.
 - Ask them to help you.
 - Help them move.
- **At work & school:**
 - Volunteer to help them with their work.
 - Offer to bring them coffee, mail, etc., if you are passing by.
 - Be alert for opportunities to be a “sounding board.”
 - Be alert for domestic needs: car, wife, children.
 - Cards, gifts, cake, on special occasions.
 - Look for opportunities to praise them and their work.
 - Ask for help, advice.
 - Be willing to take on menial tasks.
 - Let them get the credit, or share the credit, when it is due.

→ What’s this mean to you?

- Love and concern is shown, more than spoken.
 - saying: People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.
- At this point, we are showing that Christ lives in us, serving them as Christ has served us.

Friendship is the 4th step to building a bridge

→ Principles to remember at this stage:

- Work to **develop common interests.**
- **Deepen the relationship:** develop openness, honesty, trust, ease in communication.
- **Have good times, memorable times,** together.
- **Acceptance, not reformation,** is the concern at this stage.
 - not acceptance of sin
 - but not trying to teach and convert at this point

→ Suggested activities:

- **Around the neighborhood:**
 - Continued conversations over coffee, meals.
 - Make use of the home - theirs or yours.
 - Special outings of longer duration.

- Consider taking short vacations together.
- Extended work projects around the house; e.g., putting up a fence, or painting the house.
- Hobbies h. Recreation, exercise.
- **At work & school:**
 - Overnight trips where there may be extended times to not only work together, but to converse.
 - Seminars, training together.
 - Volunteer to team together on projects.
 - Pursue activities outside of work.
 - Invite over to your home.
 - Have dinner together with spouses and families.

→ **What's this mean to you?**

- **Why is the “friendship level” important?** Jesus proved to be our friend, by dying on the cross, before He asked us to do anything. Often times, we must prove ourselves to be friends, before people are willing to hear our message - the gospel of Jesus Christ (Jn. 15:13).
- Hopefully, you are already friends with some people on your flow chart, and ready to move to the next stage, sharing the gospel.

Conclusion:

→ **Summary:**

- Most of the time, we must build a bridge before we reach people with the gospel.

→ **To build bridges:**

- Initial Contact
- Become Better Acquainted
- Serving Them
- Friendship

→ **After a bridge is built**, the traffic can flow — we can share the gospel. — **next lesson**