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Getting Past Spiritual Barriers

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Here’s the situation: You want to talk with someone about the Lord, but you’re not sure how. For years I shared Christ in the same way while adapting the illustrations. And then I discovered three spiritual barriers that prevent people from engaging with God. Understanding them enabled me to listen better and engage smarter. Without them, I'm sorry to say, I sometimes repelled people. With that in mind . . .

Identifying Spiritual Barriers

Barrier One: Emotional

This barrier is built by a wounded person. Someone in the past--a pastor, Christian friend, family member, or well intended stranger--said or did something that hurt him. A person hiding behind this barrier is argumentative. They're more interested in proving you wrong than listening. So when you’re talking with someone and they’re argumentative and defensive about spiritual truth, chances are they've got an emotional barrier.

How do you get past it? I'll often say, “You seem to have strong feelings about this. What’s you’re spiritual story?" As they talk, listen and ask questions. If I’m right, and they have an emotional barrier, they’ll describe a past hurt.

Barrier Two: Intellectual

This is a serious seeker who wants more information so they can make an intelligent decision about Jesus. While they may ask tough questions, they’re non-defensive and sincere in their approach.

Barrier Three: Lifestyle

This person believes God would reject them because of how they live.

Overcoming Spiritual Barriers

People with an emotional barrier must be loved into the kingdom of God. If you dump information on them, you'll reinforce their negative feelings. Demonstrate a genuine concern and when the time is right share with them the hope you have in Christ. But remember—it may take years of love before they're ready to trust you.

If someone has an intellectual barrier answer their questions as well as you can. Suggest they read a good book like Lee Strobel’s book, *The Case for Christ*, C.S. Lewis’ book, *Mere Christianity*, or Francis Schaffer’s book, *The God Who is There.* Read the book yourself and then discuss it with them. Don’t feel you have to know all the answers. The answers are there. Have fun learning them together.

The individual with a lifestyle barrier isn't ready for truth. But—share it with them anyway and then pray for them. They probably won't show much interest until they reach a point of despair. But if you're there as a friend, when their need is great enough, you may have the privilege of leading them to Christ.

Remember, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.