ESSAY · FEBRUARY 2, 2023

Overcoming Three Barriers to Belief

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Here's the situation: You want to talk to someone about the Lord, but you're not sure how you should approach them. For years I pretty much shared the message with people in the same way—of course I adapted the illustrations to fit their background. And then I discovered three fundamental barriers people have to spiritual truth. Understanding a person's barrier has enabled me to adapt what I say to what they most need.

I'd venture to say that without an understanding of these barriers we could share the message and push someone away.

With that reality in mind—here are the three barriers and how to overcome them:

Barrier One — Emotional

Barrier One: The emotional barrier. This barrier is erected by a person who has been wounded by a Christian or other religious person in the past. Someone with this barrier tends to be argumentative. They are more interested in proving you wrong than learning truth. How do you identify it?

If you're talking to someone and they're argumentative and defensive about spiritual truth, they may have been wounded in the past. I'll often say, "You seem to have strong feelings about this. What's you're spiritual background? Have you had a bad experience with a Christian in the past? If I'm right, and they have an emotional barrier, they'll describe something which deeply hurt them.

Barrier Two — Intellectual

Barrier Two: Intellectual. This person is a serious seeker and wants more information so they can make an intelligent decision about Jesus Christ. While they may ask tough questions, they're non-defensive and sincere in their approach.

Barrier Three — Lifestyle

Barrier Three: Lifestyle. This is a person who is living in a way that they know would have to change for them to get serious about God—or at least they feel that way.

Okay, those are the barriers. Here's how to deal with them.

Loved Into the Kingdom

People with an emotional barrier must be loved into the kingdom of God. If you dump information on them, it will just reinforce their negative feelings. Demonstrate a genuine concern for them 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 are ready to trust a believer.

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 like you've got to know all the answers. The answers are there, so search for them together.

The individual with a lifestyle barrier isn't ready for the truth. But—share it with them anyway and then pray for them. They may not 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.