

The Bridge Illustration

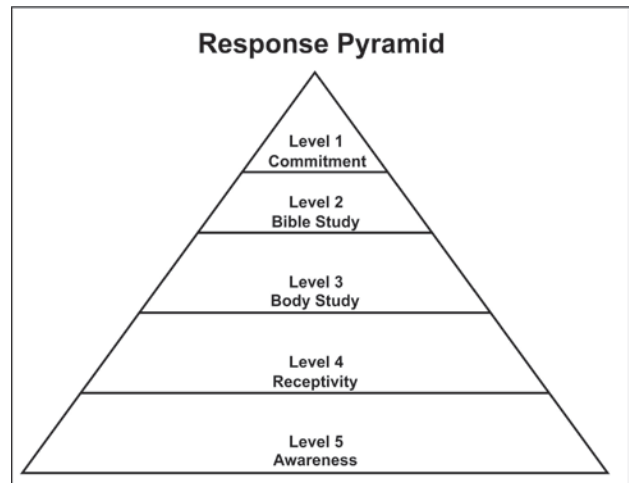
Introduction

As we get ready to study the Bridge Illustration, I wanted to take a minute to review the evangelism process. God used an agricultural example to describe the process. There is a time to sow seeds. There is a time to reap. That process takes time, and a wise farmer does not try to reap before the crop is “white for harvest.”



(John 4:35-38) “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and *then* comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. {36} Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. {37} For in this *case* the saying is true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ {38} I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor.”

The Bridge Illustration is an activity that we do at harvest time. It is not something that we would do with someone who is not open or receptive to the gospel; it is something that we do at Level 1 (Commitment). To be effective, we have to know where people are at, what season they are in, and then help them move one step closer to receiving Christ. At some point, they must receive Christ in order to become a Christian. Jesus said that if someone is not born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The Bridge Illustration is a great tool to use when a person is white for harvest. It is not the only tool, but it is a very effective tool.



(John 3:3) “Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

There are a number of gospel tracts that incorporate the bridge illustration. The Navigators have a bridge illustration. My first introduction to the bridge illustration was in an evangelism class and we were taught to draw the illustration on a piece of paper, or even on the back of a napkin. We did not have a tract to use. My favorite tract to use is the Billy Graham, “Peace With God.” I will be using that tract in this teaching.

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The Bridge Illustration has four steps. The first step is to let people know that God has a purpose for our lives. The second step is to tell people that there is a problem, which is sin. It separates us from God. The third step is that God has a remedy for that problem, which is the cross. God sent His Son to live a perfect and sinless life and then to pay the price for our sins so that we could be forgiven. The fourth step is our response. In order to receive forgiveness, we must believe and receive. I was taught a simplified way of remembering the Bridge Illustration, and it goes this way: God, Man, God, Man. God has a plan. Man has a problem. God has a solution. Man must respond.

Four Steps In The Bridge Illustration

1. Step One: God's Purpose (For our lives)
2. Step Two: Our Problem (Sin and Separation from God)
3. Step Three: God's Remedy (The Cross)
4. Step Four: Our Response (Believe and Receive)

1. Step 1: God's Purpose: Peace and Life

God loves you and wants you to experience peace and life – abundant and eternal. Here are the Scriptures that support this. Some of the Scripture references have an “a” or “b” or “c” beside them. John 10:10b means that it is the second sentence or part of John 10:10. I like to memorize the entire verse, but in sharing the bridge illustration with people, it may be more helpful just to share this part of the verse.

(Romans 5:1) “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(John 3:16) “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

(John 10:10b) “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

There are other Scriptures that could be used to tell people that God has a plan and purpose for their lives. I like Jeremiah 29:11 and if I am not using a tract to share with someone, that would be a verse that I would consider using. However, if you are going through a specific tract, it may be better to avoid too many passages.

(Jeremiah 29:11) “‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’”

Next, to transition from Step One to Step Two, it is good to ask the question. “Since God planned for us to have peace and abundant life right now, why are most people not having this experience?” Let them answer the question before giving them the Biblical answer.

2. Step 2: Our Problem: Separation

I like to establish the Scriptures as the authority. (Some evangelists prefer not to mention or quote the Bible. They like to share the verses in a very “non-religious” way.) So, I would say that in the Bible God says that He created us in His own image to have abundant (meaningful) life. He did not make us robots to automatically love and obey him, but he gave us a will and freedom

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of choice. We chose to disobey God and go our own willful way. We still make this choice today. This results in separation from God. It says in Romans 3:23 that all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. I have found it helpful to mention that I have sinned and that we all have sinned. If we just tell them that they are a sinner, that can sound judgmental and a put-down. However, if we say that we are sinners, then they identify with us and are not offended. Here are the verses that deal with our sin problem.

(Romans 3:23) “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

(Romans 6:23) “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Then, it is good to tell them that because of our sin, we are separated from God. Our choice results in separation from God. Isaiah 59:2 is excellent to use because it specifically mentions that our sins have separated us from God. The verse uses iniquities, and some may not know what that is, so when sharing that verse, it is good to say that your iniquities (or sins) have separated you from your God.

(Isaiah 59:2) “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear.”

Many people realize that they are not connected to God. They know that they are separated, and people through the ages have tried many ways to re-connect with God...without success. Man has tried to remedy the situation through good works, religion, philosophy, and morality. The Bible says that we cannot be saved by our works or efforts. Here are the verses that deal with the futility of our efforts and works.

(Proverbs 14:12) “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”

(Ephesians 2:8-9) “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

(Titus 3:5) “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”

After sharing these verses, tell the person that there is only one remedy for this problem of separation between sinful man and a holy God.

3. Step 3: God’s Remedy: The Cross

Jesus Christ is the only answer to this problem. He died on the cross and rose from the grave, paying the penalty for our sin and bridging the gap between God and people. God has provided the ONLY way...we must make the choice. Here are the verses that are used in the Bridge Illustration.

(1 Timothy 2:5) “God is on one side and all the people on the other side, and Christ Jesus, Himself man, is between them to bring them together.”

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(1 Peter 3:18) “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”

(Romans 5:8) “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

(2 Corinthians 5:21) “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

(John 14:6) "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.“

4. Step Four: Our Response

We must trust Jesus Christ and receive Him by personal invitation. Here are some supporting Scriptures that can be used. These are the ones given in the tract. I like to use Romans 10:10 with Romans 10:9. (For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” (Romans 10:10)

(Revelation 3:20) “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

(John 1:12) “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”

(Romans 10:9) “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

We must believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and receive Him by personal invitation. Believing means trust and commitment - acknowledging our sinfulness, trusting Christ’s forgiveness and letting Him control our life. Eternal, abundant life is a gift for us to receive.

Before asking them if they want to receive Christ, I believe it is good to ask them which side they are on. Ask them if they are separated from God, or if they have a relationship with God. Then, ask them if they would like to receive Christ into their life. A good question to ask is, “Is there any good reason why you cannot receive Jesus Christ right now?” If they say yes, then tell them exactly what is required to receive Christ. Then, lead them in a prayer to receive Christ. There is a prayer in the tract that can be used. You may want to read the prayer and have them pray with you.

How To Receive Christ:

1. Admit your need (I am a sinner).
2. Be willing to turn from your sins (repent).
3. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross and rose from the grave.
4. Through prayer, invite Jesus Christ to come in and control your life through the Holy Spirit (Receive Him as Lord and Savior of your life).

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What To Pray:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died for my sins. I want to turn from my sins. I now invite you to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as the Lord and Savior of my life. In Your name. Amen.

God’s Assurance Of Eternal Life

If you’ve prayed this prayer and trusting Christ, then the Bible says that you can be sure you have eternal life.

(Romans 10:13) “...for, ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”

(Ephesians 2:8-9) “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

(1 John 5:12-13) “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Receiving Christ, we are born into God’s family through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer...this is called regeneration or the “new birth.”

What Next?

This is just the beginning of a wonderful new life in Christ. To deepen this relationship you should:

1. Maintain regular intake of the Bible to know Christ better. For more information see the “Word Hand” illustration.
2. Talk to God in prayer every day. For more information see the “Prayer Hand” illustration.
3. Tell others about your new faith in Christ. For help doing this, check out the Bridge to Life booklet at the bottom of this page, or use the same illustration that is presented above. The important thing is that you let others know about your new faith in Christ.
4. Worship, fellowship and serve with other Christians in a church where Christ is preached.
5. As Christ’s representative in a needy world, demonstrate your new life by your love and concern for others.

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Small Group Break-Out

Sharing: Share one thing that you learned tonight that stood out, or one thing that you can apply in your own life. Briefly share one personal prayer request.

Prayer: Pray for one prayer request that someone in your small group has shared. Pray for one person in your family or in your “oikos” that is not a Christian. Pray for the CCA Relational Evangelism training to bear much fruit.

Homework Assignments:

1. Make sure that you have memorized at least one verse for each step of the Bridge Illustration. (It would be good to have a couple of the verses of each step memorized.)
2. Pair up with someone to practice sharing the four steps of the bridge illustration. The goal in practicing with one another is to get comfortable and confident in your ability to lead someone to making a commitment to Christ.
3. Pray for an opportunity to share the Bridge Illustration that does not know Christ.
4. Come prepared to share a testimony at our meeting in January.

Scripture Memory Assignment For Session 1: Romans 10:9-10, John 1:12