

LINDSEY MEDENWALDT

BRIDGE BUILDING



APOLOGETICS

*HOW TO GET ALONG EVEN
WHEN WE DISAGREE*

“The apostle Paul became ‘all things to all people...for the sake of the gospel’ (1 Corinthians 9:22-23). And Peter told us to ‘always be prepared to give an answer to everyone’ who asks about the reason for our hope in Christ (1 Peter 3:15). In this encouraging book, Lindsey Medenwaldt presents a wealth of practical ideas to help us do both—relate to people as friends and present to them the truth of our faith. Read it for ideas and inspiration, and don’t miss chapter 9 on building friendships. It’s worth the price of the entire book!”

—**Mark Mittelberg**, author of *Contagious Faith* and *Confident Faith*;
executive director of the Strobel Center, Colorado Christian University

“After decades of experience in apologetics, I often lament that so many unbelievers are ignorant of apologetics because Christians often lack the intellectual and relational skills needed to bring the case for Christianity to unbelievers. This book is a welcome and much-needed antidote to that problem. Through its use of Scripture, personal experiences, culture, and apologetic savvy, *Bridge-Building Apologetics* equips Christians to ‘contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints’ (Jude 3 ESV).”

—**Douglas Groothuis**, Professor of Philosophy, Denver Seminary; author
of *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*

“Evangelism and apologetics can become harsh and alienating in the hands of some people. In contrast, Lindsey Medenwaldt’s book shows us how to relate to non-Christians in a biblical and loving manner. She emphasizes that evangelism is a spiritual struggle, and that as Christians we need to build a strong foundation in our relationships with God and others so that the Holy Spirit will open people’s hearts to the gospel. Her writing style is engaging, and her catchy references to contemporary culture make it difficult to put the book down.”

—**Winfried Corduan**, Professor Emeritus of
Philosophy and Religion, Taylor University

“Lindsey delivers a timely message full of creative examples to help us see every person as God’s image bearers who deserve to hear the truth with gentleness and respect. Connecting the head and the heart, *Bridge Building Apologetics* will encourage you to evaluate your approach to evangelism and apologetics with humility.”

—**Rachel Shockey**, president of Women in Apologetics

“Too often, we characterize apologetics as a weapon deployed for combat. Representatives of alternative views engage one another as pugilists instead of image-bearers worthy of respect. Attempts to defend our faith can devolve into intellectual one-upmanship at the expense of fervor for lost souls. Such an approach undermines apologetics by neglecting its intent.

“In *Bridge-Building Apologetics*, Lindsey Medenwaldt, my dear friend, presents an apologetic for relational apologetics. Shamelessly, she values advocating for the historic Christian faith, but never at the expense of human dignity. For her, apologetics is an essential tool of evangelism. This book is a convicting work that should bear on our apologetic methods. I commend it to every believer who desires to be a witness and defender of our faith.”

—**Brandon Washington**, lead pastor, Embassy Christian Bible Church

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LINDSEY MEDENWALDT



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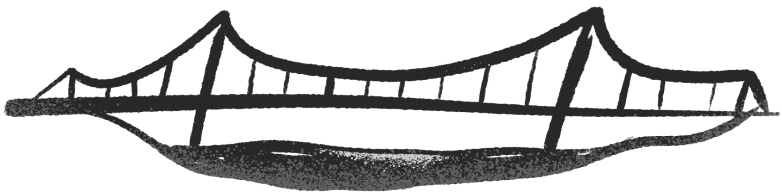
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To Jay



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CONTENTS

Foreword by Hillary Morgan Ferrer	11
Finding the Right Balance When You Share Your Faith	13

PART 1: THE ART OF BRIDGE BUILDING

1. But First, Let's Pray	21
2. Everything You Need to Know About Bridges (Unless You're an Engineer)	37
3. Apologetics—a Bridge in Need of Repair?	51
4. Bridges + Apologetics = Bridge-Building Apologetics	63
5. Jesus, the Ultimate Bridge Builder	79
6. Paul, the Gospel-Centric Bridge Builder	95
7. Other Bridge-Building Lessons from Scripture and Modernity	109

PART 2: BECOMING A BRIDGE BUILDER

8. Firm Foundation 1—Truth	125
9. Firm Foundation 2—Friendship	143
10. Interacting with People of Different Worldviews	163
11. Navigating Cultural Divides	181
12. Responding to Those Who Make Fun of Christianity and the Bible	197
13. When Barriers Are Necessary—Guardrails and Bumpers	211
14. Confidently Sharing Your Faith	221
15. Leave Room for the Holy Spirit	235

Appendix: Building the Bridge with Jehovah's Witnesses	245
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Notes	251
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FOREWORD

HILLARY MORGAN FERRER

Lindsey has been a bridge builder since long before *Bridge-Building* Apologetics ever existed. There are plenty of people who write Christian books telling us how we ought to behave as Christians. But take it from me—someone who has worked with her for years—Lindsey embodies everything she talks about in this book.

People of all stripes, colors, and creeds are drawn to Lindsey because of the way she thoughtfully engages with them. Having had her on the Mama Bear Apologetics team for many years, I continue to be impressed with the way she prioritizes listening, curiosity, and kindness with everyone she encounters—and she does it without tiptoeing around key truths that Christianity teaches.

So while this may seem like “just a book” at first glance, it is more than that. It is a discipleship manual written by someone who follows her own advice. The ideas presented are not new, *per se*. Rather, they are timeless reminders of how we are to conduct ourselves with the people around us. If all Christians would put these very scriptural, very Jesus-like, very simple to understand and commonsense habits into practice, I don’t think we as Christians would be the punchline of nearly as many jokes or the focus of so much criticism about our faith. Indeed, there are even atheists who exempt Lindsey from their snarky comments about evangelical Christians (and especially Christian apologists) because of the way she chooses to engage.

In *Bridge-Building Apologetics*, Lindsey reminds us that we don't have to compromise our biblical positions to move forward in relationships. Anyone can maintain a shallow friendship by hiding their faith or refusing to speak biblical truth. Yet we are called to have convictions! We're not called to be wimps for Jesus. So how do we maintain our zeal for Christ and the Bible while still having genuine relationships with those who think differently? Keep reading. It really isn't rocket science, and Lindsey is a good and patient teacher.

God calls all of us to be bridge builders to a world that is separated from Him—while remaining untainted by the world itself. In a day when everyone says and does what is right in their own eyes, Scripture exhorts us to be holy (set apart) by the way we relate to people with whom we disagree. The polarization in our society is getting out of control and we need bridge builders, people filled with living water who are willing to douse the flames of discord. Put this book into practice, friends. Come forth and be set apart!

FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE WHEN YOU SHARE YOUR FAITH

*Friendship is a deep oneness that develops when
two people, speaking the truth in love to one
another, journey together to the same horizon.*

TIM KELLER

Tim Keller died today.¹ As I write this, I'm wrestling with grief—realizing that we've lost a stalwart of the Christian faith. I've been scrolling through social media, reading tributes from across the globe about Keller's impact:

- “Aside from his teachings and writings, the enduring impact of Tim Keller, for me, will be how graciously and kindly he responded to trolls and people with ill intent on this platform.”²
- “Thank [you] for finishing well TK There was no reason to be so generous w/ your time, resources, nor w/ your kindness & gentleness during a moment where both seem to be rare. (outside the gospel) Thanks for loving Jesus.”³
- “Two things I learned from Tim Keller: 1) the power of gentle speech; 2) not to fear hard questions.”⁴

- “I am grateful to God for this man and will forever be so. He opened parts of the gospel that I had never seen before. I look forward to meeting Jesus in person more than anything. But I will also thank Him sincerely for sending Tim Keller.”⁵
- “Even though apologetics isn’t my strong point and I have difficulty following deep theological discussion, Tim Keller (who will be greatly missed) made me interested in these topics because of his inviting posture.”⁶

According to these reflections and others that I’ve read today about Tim Keller, the reason people held him in such high regard is because of how he shared his faith—not rudely or with an “I’m-gonna-getcha” attitude, but with humility, gentleness, and grace. Finding a balance between speaking truth and showing love seemed to be his goal, and he said as much in his book *The Meaning of Marriage*:

Love without truth is sentimentality; it supports and affirms us but keeps us in denial about our flaws. Truth without love is harshness; it gives us information but in such a way that we cannot really hear it. God’s saving love in Christ, however, is marked by both radical truthfulness about who we are and yet also radical, unconditional commitment to us.⁷

Keller’s legacy of commitment to both truth and love reached believers and unbelievers, church and unchurched. Not everyone always agreed with everything he said, and yet, their reflection was positive. For example, Reverend Patrick Mahoney wrote, “Sad to hear of the passing of Tim Keller. A [C]hristian leader whom I greatly admired even when I disagreed with him. His founding of

the Gospel Coalition was a powerful tool to bring orthodox evangelical churches back to America's cities."⁸ Keller seemed to understand that his mission was to make disciples, and he did so with a passion and love that was recognized by many, even some who disagreed with him.

Unfortunately, Keller's example isn't the mainstream, which is perhaps why his death caused such an outpouring of condolences on social media. We felt this loss because we lost someone important not because of who he was, but what he did for whom he loved, his Savior. I honestly hesitated to write about Keller in this book because I don't want to put anyone on a pedestal. I didn't know Keller personally, nor do I know everything he ever said or wrote or did. What I do know is that based on interviews, books, and podcasts he was a part of, he loved God, he loved people, and he aimed to make disciples. This book is born out of a desire to raise up more Christians who talk the talk and walk the walk.

Talking about my faith hasn't always been easy, but growing up, I'm sure it was easier for me than it probably was for most. I remember getting in trouble in kindergarten because I told a kid he was going to hell if he didn't give his life to Jesus (whoa, I know, but I was a new Christian who was very much on fire and didn't have couth). I also remember reading my Bible with a friend on the school bus and sharing my faith with my friends in high school.

Because I grew up in the church, I thought I had my faith covered. I knew God is real. I knew Jesus died for me. I knew that Jesus told His followers to make disciples. Sharing my worldview with others was supposed to be par for the course. I was a missionary kid and pastor's kid—that had to count for something, right? Wrong. Well, not entirely wrong, just misguided thinking.

Growing up in the church certainly helped, and doing evangelism next to my parents was the kind of experience some people only dream of. I'm grateful for that, but I'm here to tell you it wasn't enough. As

I grew older, I found myself not sharing my faith with others as often as I once did. Not because I was ashamed or afraid of backlash, but because my faith never came up. I was rarely asked to share my hope. People noticed I read my Bible, sure, but they didn't often ask me questions, and I was not offering any answers without being asked.

Then I entered seminary.⁹ I went to school to grow closer with my husband, Jay—I was looking for more substantial things to talk about over dinner and knew he enjoyed apologetics.¹⁰ He became a Christian in part because of apologetics. Jay would talk about apologetics, and typically, I would listen with interest but would walk away not fully understanding. I had rationalized that apologetics was good for him but not necessary for me. And I was okay with that until my first apologetics class with Douglas Groothuis, author of the 1,000-page tome *Christian Apologetics*.

At one point during that first class, Dr. Groothuis asked us to interview an unbeliever. We didn't have to answer any questions; we just had to listen and learn. I will be forever grateful to my friend—I'll call her Priscilla—for agreeing to the conversation. It was because of that assignment that I realized I couldn't answer basic questions about my faith, including the most basic question of all: Why do I believe Christianity is true? It was also because of that conversation that the idea for this book was born. Not right away, but over time, I started to understand the importance of building bridges.

During my time at seminary, I read some books about how to engage with others, but I could never quite find what I was looking for in those texts. All too often I read the words *war*, *opponent*, and *battle* mixed in with tips about having discussions about faith. All too rarely have I stumbled upon the words *gentleness*, *relationship*, and *love*.

If you're reading this book, that probably means you're hoping for tips about having real relationships with people. I recently heard the term *missional friendship*—a friendship you enter with the primary goal of sharing your faith. The person becomes your mission. I'm not

saying these kinds of relationships are bad, but that's not solely what I talk about in this book. Instead, I'm encouraging you to seek real, authentic relationships with people. The kind that can greatly benefit your life and theirs. Maybe one day you'll get asked about your faith. But maybe you won't. If you do, then this book is going to give you what you need to be ready for that day. The point is, without a real relationship, one with genuine trust and love, you're probably never going to earn a place at the table.

Let me give you an example. Think about Thanksgiving and Christmas. Typically, those holidays are filled with family visits, and so often I hear people say, "Religion and politics always come up at these gatherings." Yep, and you know why? Because of the already-existing relationships in those settings. Usually, family gatherings include people you grew up with. The people you've done life with. You've experienced life (and sometimes death) with them. And that's why such gatherings are a more comfortable spot for somewhat challenging topics like religion and politics.

How does this transfer outside of familial relationships? Time, trust, and tact. It doesn't happen overnight, and it doesn't happen with ulterior motives in place. I'm talking about friendships that are enduring. I recognize that there is a spectrum. Some friends are the kind you'll want to retire with, go on family trips with, and celebrate every occasion with. Others are the kind you'll see for dinner every couple of months, but you pick up right where you left off. Still others you talk with once or twice a year, but there's a bond that exists despite time and distance. In other words, I'm not talking about people you just met at the playground or your kid's little league game. Sometimes opportunities will arise in those circumstances, but more often than not, that's just a chance to meet someone and set up a playdate.¹¹

Ultimately, this is a book about relationships. Yes, you'll learn some about apologetics. Yes, you'll learn some about evangelism.

But more than anything, you'll learn about love. Because as Christians, we're called to love God and love people. Once we do those things well, it gets much easier to talk about our faith, share truth, and make disciples. After all, we should want to shout from the rooftops about the hope we have. This book will help you do that with confidence, grace, and love.

A NOTE ABOUT PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS I MENTION IN THIS BOOK

Because this is a book about bridge building, I sought out sources from a wide variety of spaces, including some that are not often considered reliable or helpful by Christians. I understand why we are tentative about who we learn from, but I have found that we may miss noteworthy observations because we hold to differing theological or worldview perspectives. As such, I occasionally mention non-Christian people and organizations in this book. Please know this does not mean I endorse them. Although we may not always agree with non-Christians or professing Christians of certain backgrounds, there are certainly times when they make a point that can be informative, and it's for this reason that I include such points in this book.

PART 1

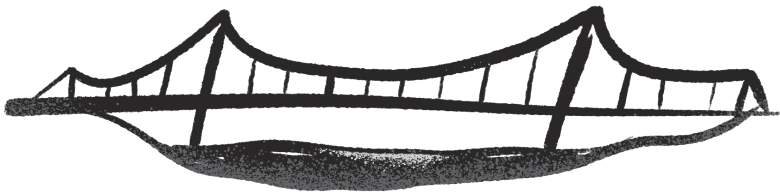
THE ART OF BRIDGE BUILDING

Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

PHILIPPIANS 3:17

Don't burn bridges. You'll be surprised how many times you have to cross the same river.¹

H. JACKSON BROWN JR.



BUT FIRST, LET'S PRAY

To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.

MARTIN LUTHER

You might be wondering why there's a chapter about prayer in a book about bridge-building apologetics. It is a fair question, and the answer is simple: Prayer is fundamental and foundational to our faith, to our relationship with the Father, and to our well-being as humans. I truly believe that you cannot have effective bridge building without prayer.

Did you know that prayer is beneficial to your health? Studies have shown that communal prayer (prayer with other people) can decrease levels of depression and anxiety.¹ Praying for others can decrease your anger and aggression,² as well as increase your desire to offer forgiveness.³ In other words, you're more likely to be compassionate toward others (and even yourself) when you pray. You're more likely to engage in healthy conversations with others. And you're more likely to be well in your soul as well as your physical being. Prayer is a good thing.

Knowing this, perhaps you can see why we're talking about prayer in this book. But why is the chapter on prayer first, before we even talk about bridges or apologetics? That answer is simple too. We should pray before every time we share our faith, if possible. We

should ask God for peace within the conversation, wisdom for the words to speak, and help with the recall of information. That's why I am beginning this book with a chapter about prayer. I believe that before we enter into conversations about our faith, we should pray. We should ask the Holy Spirit to join us in our endeavor. He is our helper, after all (we will talk more about this in chapter 15).

Prayer is a vital part of the Christian life. Don't leave home without it when you start to engage with others about your faith. I recognize that we have seasons when our prayer lives are vibrant and seasons when we can't think of a single word to say. I just had a friend tell me that she can do nothing but groan sometimes when her circumstances are utterly awful. Guess what? The Lord hears our groans too. He is compassionate toward His people (just look at the feeding of the 4,000 in Mark 8—Jesus knew the people were both spiritually and physically hungry, so He fed them spiritually and physically). My hope is that this chapter will help you develop an ongoing conversation with your Creator, the one who formed you in His image, the one who sent His only Son to save you. He wants to talk with you. You need only begin. The good news is that the more you talk with God, the easier it will be to share your relationship with Him with others.

Prayer is good for your spiritual health too. Not only does it bring you closer to your Creator, but it can also change your body and your mind, and it can impact the way you react toward others. In high school, I was a fan of contemporary Christian music artist Jaci Velasquez. One of her songs that sticks with me to this day is "On My Knees." As you may imagine from the title, it's a song about prayer—specifically, about how things change when we fall at the feet of Jesus. We're changed because our focus is re-centered on what matters—on who matters—when we pray. We're reminded that we are children of God, and we are loved deeply by Him. Praying can be difficult because it doesn't always seem natural, but we're meant to pray. Time and time again, Scripture exhorts us to pray:

- “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24).
- “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Romans 12:12).
- “Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:5-7 ESV).
- “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise” (James 5:13 ESV).

Put another way, God commands us to pray. In his book *Prayer for Beginners*, Peter Kreeft explains, “We pray to obey God, not to ‘play God.’ We pray, not to change God’s mind, but to change our own; not to command God, but to let God command us. We pray to let God be God.”⁴

HOW DO WE BEGIN?

I read recently that singer and actor Meat Loaf (d. 2022) professed to be religious. When I dug a little deeper, I learned that he especially valued prayer. So much, in fact, that if he didn’t pray, he apologized to God for the lack of communication with Him. With that in mind, it’s worth remembering a few points: First, prayer is valuable. Second, we should be in constant prayer. And third, prayer is our way to be in conversation with our Father.

Prayer isn’t meant to be used as a last resort when we can’t find our car keys, although the attitude of dependence on God in times

of need is one we should foster. How often do we let situations go completely south before thinking about asking the Lord for help? I'm guilty of this too. But the Bible tells us quite clearly that we should "pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Easier said than done, though, right? And even when we want to heed this verse, we sometimes have no idea where to start. So, let's start where Jesus started—the Lord's Prayer.

Pray like Jesus

This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:9-13).

Not long ago, social media was ablaze because a question about the Lord's Prayer on the popular trivia show, *Jeopardy*, confounded all three contestants.⁵ The news editor of *Christianity Today* called the situation “embarrassing,”⁶ and others thought it confirmed a moral decline in our culture. Whether it's a sign of the times or not, I can't be sure, but I'm not surprised. In general, prayer is on the decline in both the US and the UK.⁷ How can we expect anyone to know the words to arguably the most popular prayer in the world when prayer isn't a priority?

Early on in my service as a children's ministry director, I knew I wanted the children in my church to memorize the Lord's Prayer.

We often concluded our kids' services with the Lord's Prayer, including the ever-so-eloquent doxology "for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen." I love hearing children pray, and I especially love it when we pray the Lord's Prayer together. Prayer is powerful when done in a community of believers. The Lord's Prayer was intended for community when Jesus taught it to His disciples. Reverend John Yieh summarizes it well:

It reflects Jesus' concerns for God's holiness, God's kingdom, and God's will, and tells his followers which physical and spiritual needs they can ask God, their heavenly Father, to help meet. As a community prayer, it gives Christians identity, solidarity, and confidence as the beloved children of God. As a ritual practice, it strengthens the believers' filial relationship with God, sets priorities for their missions, and provides divine reassurance, inner peace, and eschatological hope to support their daily struggles with the contingencies of their lives and the evil in the world.⁸

In other words, the Lord's Prayer gives us the opportunity to focus on God and to truly give all of our thoughts, fears, and thanksgiving to Him, together with other believers. When you say this prayer, you're helping remind yourself that God is with you. He's for you. He's holy. And no matter what, He wants what is best for you. By saying the Lord's Prayer, you're telling the Father that you trust Him. That you need Him. And that no matter what, you'll serve Him. It's a great place to start when you don't know the words to say when you pray.

Scripture is full of examples of Jesus and His prayer habits. He prayed before performing miracles, to reveal His purposes, to deal with His own suffering and pain, and to ask for wisdom. He prayed alone and with others. In other words, He prayed without ceasing.

He was in constant conversation with the Father, and He gave us the example to follow in our own lives.

Memorizing and reciting the Lord's Prayer is a valuable spiritual practice, but there's a risk that it could become words we recite rather than a prayer we believe. Martin Luther once called the Lord's prayer "the greatest martyr on earth" because Christians don't use it properly—that is, with confidence in what it states.⁹ James R. Nestingen explained that "the Lord's Prayer sees all of life *coram deo*, in relation to God; the neighbor is intimately involved in the hearing of God's word, the coming of the kingdom, and the doing of God's will."¹⁰ *Coram deo* means to be or live in God's presence.¹¹

So when you pray the Lord's Prayer, do so with confidence that you are in the presence of your Creator, the One who has the power to change your life and the lives of others. His name is hallowed and holy and to be revered with all you have within you. He equips you with all you need. The Lord's Prayer gives you an opportunity to remind yourself of God's greatness as well as His extraordinary love for you. What a blessing it is to know that we are in God's presence at all times, even when we feel alone. This is especially helpful to remember as bridge builders because it means we never enter a situation by ourselves—our wonderful and mighty Creator is with us.

Pray like Paul

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses

knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:14-19).

Ephesians 3 is its own gospel message. Paul was bold. He recognized God's power. He highlighted Jesus' love. If you've read Paul's letters in the New Testament, you've likely noticed that he liked to open with a greeting that included a prayer. For example, in Romans 1, he starts,

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you (verses 8-10).

Whew! Can you imagine saying that each time you write an email to a friend? But if you were to receive an email that opened with those words, how would you feel? We've already seen that praying for others can improve your sense of well-being, so maybe this is the way forward: a greeting with a reminder that we're praying for them.

A bridge builder like Paul knew what he was called to do: to share Jesus with others. He was called to spread the gospel far and wide, no matter the cost. And he found his strength in the Lord. He never left home without the Holy Spirit, and he always called on the Father when interacting with others. As Alister Begg explains, "Paul prayed big prayers because he believed great things."¹² He knew to pray with the expectation that God was ever present and all-powerful. Even in times of trial, Paul trusted that Jesus was who He said He was and could do what He said He could do. Ultimately, Paul believed the gospel. He knew it to be true, and he relied on its truth.

A major problem with the church as a collective is that people have lost sight of the gospel. Some who profess to be Christians don't even know the gospel message. A 2020 survey by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University found that 52 percent of the respondents who self-identified as Christians believe in a works-based salvation.¹³ They aren't holding on to the hope within that comes from Christ alone, and they don't have sight of who they are as image bearers and children of God.

We, like Paul, should keep the gospel message at the center of our lives, not straying to the left or the right (Proverbs 4:27). Paul's reliance on the gospel was poured out in his prayer life, and he provides us with an excellent example of how to serve others by praying big.

Pray like the Psalmists

The past year has been difficult for me personally, and as I write this chapter, I'm dealing with some challenging circumstances in my life. I also just learned of yet another school shooting in which children and adults died needlessly at the hands of a gunman. I've been heartbroken due to loss, suffering, and the pain in our world. James 1:2-4 has echoed through my mind on an endless loop during this season: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." And I can't think of a better place to find examples of perseverance than in the Old Testament. Moses, David, Esther, Job, Ruth, and the Jewish people, just to name a few. We see evidence of their endurance in the Psalms.

- "Though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand" (Psalm 37:24).
- "The LORD will vindicate me; your love, LORD, endures

forever—do not abandon the works of your hands” (Psalm 138:8).

- “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging” (Psalm 46:1-3).

The Psalms are full of verses that are well suited to encouraging us to seek refuge in God when confronted with danger, whether that danger is physical or spiritual. As Eugene Peterson wrote in his book *Working the Angles*, “Everything that a person can possibly feel, experience, and say is brought into expression before God in the Psalms.”¹⁴ I’ve learned this firsthand. When I first started writing about world religions, I almost immediately had struggles spiritually.

For example, I have spent time studying the New Age movement, and as I got deeper into the trenches of it, I found myself feeling as though I was being weighed down. I felt like I was trudging through mud. I reached out to one of my mentors, Douglas Groothuis, and I asked him for help. I knew that he would have helpful advice because of his own experiences writing about the New Age movement. His recommendation? Pray Psalm 91. This psalm is often attributed to Moses, and he probably wrote it after he built the tabernacle. It’s a prayer for protection and peace.

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust”...

For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;

they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
You will tread on the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent
(verses 1-2, 11-13).

This psalm reminds us that God is our refuge. Our fortress. He commands His angels on our behalf. The entire chapter is gold, and I highly encourage you to memorize it as you begin to engage with others about your faith.

Recently I tried a new practice during a devotional time with some of my co-workers. We all took Psalm 23 and rewrote it to apply to our own lives. The results were beautiful, and I was deeply encouraged to hear some of the different takeaways each of us gained from the same six verses. In my own reflection of Psalm 23, I found myself repeating, “The Lord is in control.” This is a helpful practice if you are trying to engage with the book of Psalms in a new way, but remember that the takeaways you come up with are just that. Always be sure to read from the most reliable Bible translations and to correctly study and interpret the psalmists.

Another beautiful aspect of the Psalms is that they are mostly songs, which makes them perfect for easy memorization. The first time I memorized Psalm 91, I did so to music. My parents were missionaries, and singing was often how we memorized Scripture passages. Indeed, that’s how the Jewish people likely memorized the Psalms too. After all, the word *psalm*, in Hebrew, means “to make jubilant music.” With that in mind, there are musical versions of Psalm 91 available online. I encourage you to find one you like and memorize it. Then when you are faced with a spiritual battle, lean on the words as if they were a life raft in the middle of the ocean. Do not drown in your weariness. Instead, trust that God will deliver you.

You can put almost every psalm to music, so find one that resonates

with you during this season of your life. Throughout the Psalms there are reminders of God's mercy, justice, and peace. Integrating the Psalms into your prayer life isn't difficult; take them one at a time. Elmer L. Towns, author of *Praying the Psalms*, says, "Each Psalm is a worship event...The Psalms are a mirror that reflects your soul."¹⁵

When you're bridge building, among the Psalms that you might find most helpful are Psalms 19, 57, 63, 122, 126, and 144. The following verses might be good starting points for you as you more openly share with others about the hope within you:

- "Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name" (Psalm 86:11).
- "My mouth will speak words of wisdom; the meditation of my heart will give you understanding" (Psalm 49:3).
- "The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).

No matter where you begin in the Psalms, I do encourage you to begin. Take a psalm a day, and see how this practice can transform your prayer life, your view of the world, and your desire to share the gospel with others.

Pray like Leslie Strobel

You may know about Lee Strobel (author of books like *The Case for Christ* and *The Case for Miracles*), but perhaps you don't know much about his wife, Leslie. After she became a Christian, she was desperate to see Lee come to faith in Christ too, but it seemed like his heart was hardened. We all know that a hardened heart can be hard to penetrate. Lee says that Leslie's prayers were a key factor in his transformation and conversion to Christianity.¹⁶

Every day, Leslie prayed Ezekiel 36:26 on Lee's behalf: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." Maybe, like Leslie, you're engaging with someone who has a hardened heart toward God. Your words may seem to bounce off without sticking. But God's Word remains true. You are not alone—you have a help-mate, the Holy Spirit. Pray that God will produce the transformation that you cannot. God sees all and knows all and loves all. He wants to draw people to Himself. Allow your prayers to work on their behalf.

BUILDING THE BRIDGE

Prayer should be an important part of your Christian walk, especially as a bridge builder. If you're still wondering how to begin, let me remind you once more of how Jesus prayed and how He taught us to pray. He thanked His Father. He asked for comfort. He asked that people know God through the gospel. He even prayed for blessings before eating. If that's where you need to start, go for it. Pray before every meal, thanking God for His provision. Then make the move to praying for your loved ones, coworkers, and friends.

No matter where you begin, take that step because it will help you as you build bridges with others, and it will strengthen the bridge that you have been building toward God in your own life. In the context of bridge building, what should you be praying for? My top three go-tos are for peace, wisdom, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Your top three might be different, but the ones I go with consistently help me through difficult or important conversations (like discussions about someone's eternal life).

Here are some starting points that might help you:

- Pray that your mind is protected from falsehood.

- Pray that God will give you the wisdom to know when to speak and when to listen.
- Pray that God will remind you of what you need to say to a particular person and what you can leave out.
- Pray that you'll have divine appointments and opportunities to share your faith.
- Pray that peace will be maintained throughout your conversations and afterward.

Ultimately, when we pray, we are reminded of the powerful God who created us and of His great love for us. Through prayer, transformation can happen, within us and in other people's lives. Andrew Murray summed it up beautifully in *The Prayer Life*: "Take time in the inner chamber to bow down and worship, and wait on Him until He unveils Himself and takes possession of you and goes out with you to show how a man may live and walk in abiding fellowship with an unseen Lord."¹⁷ May your prayer life reveal Christ to others and strengthen your own faith in and love of the Father.

Whenever you are about to engage with a friend or acquaintance about your faith, take a deep breath first and say a prayer. When you hear a knock on your door, take a deep breath first and say a prayer. When you're asked about the hope that is within you, take a deep breath first and say a prayer.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What does the practice of prayer look like in your life right now?
2. How have you seen prayer make a difference in your life or in the life of someone you care about?
3. Do you think prayer brings you closer to God? Why or why not?
4. In what ways do you think prayer can help you sort through any anxiety you might feel when you attempt to build bridges and share your faith with others?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Please be aware that the resources I recommend in this book may not always align with the Christian worldview or the faith tradition you believe. I've included books from all sides, including atheists. It's okay to read materials that challenge us and help us gain knowledge so that we may more effectively build bridges. I do not necessarily agree with everything found within the books and resources I recommend.

Chris Heinz, *Made to Pray: How to Find Your Best Prayer Types* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2013)

Peter Kreeft, *Prayer for Beginners* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2000)

Tish Harrison Warren, *Prayer in the Night: For Those Who Work or Watch or Weep* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2021)

Alistair Begg, *Pray Big: Learn to Pray Like an Apostle* (Charlotte, NC: The Good Book Company, 2019)

Lectio 365 daily devotional app