

## **Building Bridges to the Gospel with QuEST 2.0**

**Note:** This training resource is adaptable to a variety of settings. It can be used in large group gatherings for outreach training or in small groups. It can even be used in one-on-one discipling. Feel free to experiment. Two things to consider:

- 1. It is almost always best to provide this training after the participants have had the opportunity to use QuEST on two or more occasions. They will be more motivated once they have a “live -context” through which to process what they hear. It is helpful to have them share answers they have heard to each question.**
- 2. This training can also be parceled out one “QuEST-ion” at a time. If so, it is normally most helpful to do the fifth question first, since it will be the easiest to build a bridge to the gospel from this question.**

Every person’s life is incomplete apart from Christ. People try to fill the “holes” with all kinds of things that will never truly fit. Whether it is putting the square peg in the round hole or the round peg in the square hole, it always leaves space around the edges. People deal with the spaces in life in a variety of ways. Some ignore them. Some hide them. Some seek to fill them with more things. Some even fail to recognize them. Where are these “holes” found? They are found in a person’s thinking, desires and choices. They are found everywhere inside a person’s life.

Many times, it is in or near these “inner holes” that we will discover God’s Spirit at work in a person’s life. If we can discern where God is at work, we can often build a bridge to the gospel. The key to discovering the spaces where God is at work (or would like to work) in another’s life, is listening. *The key to listening is asking good questions.*

*QuEST 2.0 provides you with a brief look inside six different windows to a person’s soul:*

- ◆ Learn about their religious background—where they’ve been.
- ◆ Learn where they place themselves on their spiritual journey—where they’re at.
- ◆ How they feel about their religious experience.
- ◆ What their conception of God is.
- ◆ How they have experienced God.
- ◆ What their level of spiritual interest or openness is.

Each answer can provide insight that may lead to a deeper discussion and more discoveries about the person. Each insight provides a potential bridge to the gospel. The key to QuEST (as a tool for building bridges in evangelism) is in knowing what to look for in each answer and how to build bridges through honest interest and questions.

It is true that some people answer the questions rather quickly, not giving much thought or reflection to their answers. But even the casual answers can provide insights leading to much more, if they are followed up by other good questions.

### *Bridge Building*

When you ask the QuEST 2.0 questions, use follow-up questions only to help you clarify what they are saying. After asking all six questions, choose the answer(s) you would like to explore more. Choose to ask about the answer(s) you sense have the most potential for significant dialogue or providing insights into their life.

It is important at this stage to remember they have probably only given permission to respond to the QuEST questions. To go beyond that now, you need to ask permission again. For example, you might say, “That was the last question, and I appreciate you taking the time to answer them. But I was interested in your answer to the third question. Could I ask you more about that? (Response.) Why did you say...?”

As you explore their answers more, listen carefully. Be sensitive to what they are sharing about their beliefs and experiences. Let them talk freely and completely. Invite them to tell you more. Desire to understand them first. Through that understanding, you will often discern how the gospel relates to their life.

As you listen, express understanding. Affirm them when you can agree. Do not attack them when you disagree. In many cases, you will be seeking to help them discover their own inconsistencies in their life and thoughts.

### *Question 1: What was your religious background as a child?*

This question helps the individual “ease” into a conversation in order to answer the more thought provoking questions later. The purpose of the question is to open the dialogue about spiritual issues with a non-threatening question. It is generally easier for people to talk about their past than the present. This question gives them the option of talking as much or as little as they want. Their answers will generally be brief and factual, stating a religious organization or denomination.

- ◆ *Allow the question to be a gentle knock to open the door to a conversation about spiritual things.*

There may not be direct bridges to the gospel from this question, unless people begin to open up significantly about their experiences with religion.

### *Question 2: How do you identify yourself now with respect to religion?*

This question provides an opportunity for people to move a step deeper into their thinking and communication. By asking them where they stand now with respect to religion, you are asking them to process the direction they’ve gone in regards to religion—they may have turned away from religion altogether or chosen to earnestly seek the truth. The most common answers to the first question were an organization or religious denomination, but answers to the second question often revealed their spiritual condition or belief system.

- ◆ *Listen for the change in their answers from Question 1 to Question 2 to gain insights into their present spiritual journey.*

If you do see a change, or even if you don’t, it may be worthwhile to take an opportunity to dig a little deeper into their experience. Ask them why they changed? Or what made them stay the same?

In small groups, reflect how you would bring a person closer to hearing about the gospel. What questions would you ask to further discussion and deeper thinking? How would you approach someone who sees themselves as an atheist? Or a Catholic?

For example, you might say, “I was interested in how you answered Question 2 when you said that you identify yourself as an Episcopal. In your church background, have you had a lot of exposure to the Bible? Is reading the Bible a significant part of your faith? The central theme of the Bible is about how a person can experience a relationship with God. Yet the turning point of the Bible’s story is Jesus’ death. Have you ever thought about why Jesus had to die?”

Another example could be, “I remember how you said that you grew up Catholic, but you mentioned that you now consider yourself to be an atheist. If you don’t mind my asking, I’d like to know what made you change from believing in a God to believing that there is no God.”

*Question 3: What three words would you use to describe your religious experience?*

Keep in mind that people are now revealing more about themselves spiritually (in a positive or negative) way. Almost half of those interviewed indicated that their religious experience has been positive (47%). But a significant number, 19% of those surveyed, have had a negative religious experience. At this point, people may feel comfortable sharing more freely what their religious experience has been and may choose to open up and share their experiences. You may find that others choose to stay on the cautious side and give non-revealing answers.

It is important to let them know that you are a safe person with whom to share. Be an affirming, respectful listener.

- ◆ *Listen for loaded terms to explore more of what's behind those loaded terms.*

Loaded terms are words that hint at more. Follow-up questions directed at loaded terms may open up significant windows into the individual's soul.

If their answer was positive, you could affirm them in their good Christian experience, and describe salvation more fully and ask if they have experienced this or are still moving toward it. It is important not to ask it as a "yes or no" question. To offer the option of "still moving towards it" allows them to indicate they have not yet experienced Christ without sounding (or feeling) like a bad person.

For example, you might say, "That's great that you have such a positive view of your experience with Christianity. I wanted to ask you one question about that. The Bible describes that as an experience where Christ actually enters the person's life, forgives their sin and begins to change their life from the inside out. Would you say you have ever experienced this, or is this something you are still moving toward?"

When they say, "I am still moving towards it" (which is usually the most common response) or "I don't know", ask, "Could I take a few minutes to show you from the Bible how a person experiences this?"

*Question 4: Who or what is God to you?*

This question shifts the person from thinking of their religious experience to revealing their view of God. There are a wide variety of experiences and question can help narrow it down to God and their understanding of who God is.

- ◆ *Listen for truths or misconceptions that people have about God.*

Most will have a shallow view of God. This is an opportunity to ask questions to have them think more profoundly about God, and their relationship to God. As you think about questions to ask, remember to affirm their experiences and viewpoints, and explore deeper into what they're thinking.

A possible bridge to the gospel could be, "In your response to Question 4, you said that you see God as a creator of everything. Do you believe that God is still active in the world today? Do you think He is a personal, knowable God?.. I believe that God is personal and that we can have a relationship to know Him. Could I take a few minutes to show you an outline from the Bible about how we can have that relationship?"

*Question 5: Have you ever experienced God? If so, how?*

The majority of people interviewed believe that they have experienced God in some way. As they answer, they are revealing significant, even profound, experiences they believe they have had of God. Ask questions to understand more fully what they have experienced. These questions are meant to reveal how people perceive God at work around them and in them. “God did this so that men would reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.” (Acts 17:27)

- ◆ *Listen for their insights into how aware they are of God working in their lives and around them.*

A possible bridge could be, “I thought it was really amazing to hear how you experienced God through answered prayer. God does touch people’s lives in incredible ways. The Bible says that God works in our lives to make us aware of Him working in us and around us. The Bible teaches that the most profound way God can touch our lives is when we realize that God wants a relationship with us and we can have that relationship. When we accept Christ into our lives, we experience love and forgiveness, and a life change that is brought about by God. Would you say that you have experienced this life change or are you still moving toward it?”

*Question 6: If you could rate all your desires on a scale from 1-10, with those things you desire most in life being a 10 and the things you desire least being a 1, where would you put your desire to know God?*

What do you think is the most common answer to this question? In results from 1999 QuEST surveys, 41% answered with a 10. The average was around 8. Most people want to be perceived (or perceive themselves) as being spiritually open.

- ◆ *Listen for spiritual openness.*

There are two common approaches to this question. The direct approach is especially helpful if their response is high. You can simply say, “That’s great you have such a strong desire to know God. Have you ever had a chance to see what the Bible says about how we can actually know Him in a personal way? Could I show it to you?”

For a more conversational approach, you could ask, “How do you think the average student would answer this question?” (Most will guess relatively low—a 3, 4, or 5. A few will guess right.) “Actually, the most common answer is a 10 (about 40%). Do you think students really are interested in knowing God? Suppose we could turn the question around and ask God this same thing? How do you think He would rate His desire to know us?” (Most will think it’s high. Some will say low, thinking they are too bad for God to desire a relationship with them.) The bridge can be, “If the Bible is true, and I’m convinced it is, it would definitely be a 10. In fact, God desires a relationship with us far more than we desire one with Him. Has anyone ever showed you from the Bible all He has done to make that possible? Could I take a few minutes and see what you think of it?”

*Concluding Principles*

- <sup>1</sup> Expect God to be a work in people’s lives.
- <sup>2</sup> Use QuEST to see inside the windows of the soul, to find where God’s Spirit is at work.
- <sup>3</sup> Listen carefully to the answers for each question.
- <sup>4</sup> Ask permission to hear more of their thinking, especially “why” they answered the way they did.
- <sup>5</sup> Know what to look for in their answers to each question.
- <sup>6</sup> Build bridges that show the relevance of the gospel to their answers.
- <sup>7</sup> Ask permission to share the gospel with them.
- <sup>8</sup> *Pray* before, during and after!