

Overcoming Outreach Obstacles

Objectives

After this lesson participants will:

- To identify the obstacles in their community and possible bridges to overcome those obstacles
- To understand that God is the one who supplies our needs in reaching out to others
- To pray for God's plan to overcome the outreach obstacles

Lesson Overview

Welcome and Warm-Up	10 min
Debrief the Barriers Game	10 min
Problem Solving Regarding "Bridges"	20 min
Is This About Money?	10 min
Wrap Up & Prayer	10 min

Approximate Total Time: 60 min

Materials

Illustration option:

- Several balloons or inflatable balls
- Blank paper for participants

Media option:

PowerPoint slides for this lesson

Scripture passages:

- John 13:35
- Judges 7:5-7
- Matthew 10:9-10
- Matthew 14:21
- Matthew 18:14



Welcome and Warm-Up

10 min

Play a Game: Barriers



(Arrange two-thirds of the participants in a large circle, standing and facing outward. Have the remaining one third of the participants move to the center of the circle. Ask them to sit on chairs or on the ground. Choose three participants to stand outside the circle. They must be on their knees. Give each a balloon or ball. Their job is to try to get the balloon/ball over the outside circle of participants to the people sitting in the middle of the circle. The participants forming the circle must try to stop the balloon/ball from going in. Play for several minutes, choosing new outside players as the balloons/ balls reach the center group.)



The game we just played can give us many insights about barriers to people receiving the gospel. Today's lesson focuses on how to overcome these outreach obstacles. **THE 1for50 HAND: This lesson helps us consider important skills to help us "Reach the Unreached."**

Debriefing the Barriers Game

10 min

What the Game Represents

Imagine that the balloons represent the gospel, the people inside the circle are the unreached, people outside are missionaries or evangelists and the rest are barriers to the gospel.



(Have participants answer these questions in groups of two or three for few minutes before sharing answers together.)

Missionaries/Evangelists

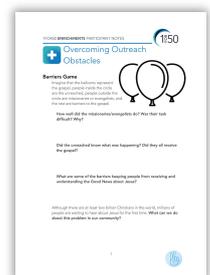
- **How well did the missionaries/evangelists do?**
- **Was their task difficult? Why?** (Not enough of them, too many barriers.)

Unreached

- **Did the unreached know what was happening?**
- **Did they all receive the gospel?** (It was difficult. And many only touched the gospel once or twice before it was gone again. They might not be life-long disciples. A lot of them didn't even have a chance to touch the balloon.)

Barriers

- **What are some of the barriers keeping people from receiving and understanding the Good News about Jesus?** (language, governments, other religious, families, lack of understanding, wrong teachings, no one to tell them about Jesus, or tell them how to grow as a disciple.)



Although there are at least two billion Christians in the world, millions of people are still waiting to hear about Jesus for the first time. What can we do about this in our own communities?

Problem Solving Regarding Bridges

20 min



In order to overcome barriers, we need to create bridges that cross them. Think of some of the outreach obstacles or barriers you face. (Work in small groups—If possible with others from the same community or ministry—to answer the questions on pages two and three of the Participant Notes. Add other categories you think are relevant or important. Note: It may be beneficial to have different groups start at different categories so that all questions will be addressed by at least one group during the time given.)

Culture/Religion

- **What are the differences between you and the children you are trying to reach?** List as many ideas as possible.
- **What are some ideas and strategies for “overcoming/crossing these bridges” so you can communicate and develop relationships?**

Language

- **What are the differences between you and the children you are trying to reach in terms of language?** For those who never been to a church nor hearing Jesus before, a lot of Church/Christian jargons are “different language.”
- **What will you do to ensure that children understand your vocabulary?**

Families

- **In what ways can families present obstacles to reaching children?**
- **In what ways can families present opportunities?**
- **In what ways will you connect with families as you reach out to children?**

Other Churches

- **What other churches are in your area? How will your outreach impact them?**
- **Which churches might have people interested in working along with you to reach children in your area?**
- **What bridges do you need to build with other churches so that “the world will know we are Christians by our love for one another”? (John 13:35)**



Time & Process

- **Where are the children on their journey toward believing in Jesus?**
- **Do we expect them to believe immediately and follow Jesus or is there a process involved?** Many of us consider people saved, "in," or not saved, "out." We seldom realize that many are "on the way" to becoming believers...that it is more than a one-time event. The process will be different for everyone.



(After 10 minutes, have groups share responses to the categories and questions.)

There is a way to overcome every obstacle and barrier to reaching out with the gospel. It may take time, patience, courage and creativity, but God has made a way. Yet, there is one obstacle that hasn't yet been discussed, and for some people it seems to be what stops them from reaching out: *money!*

Is This About Money?

10 min



Do we need a lot of money in order to do outreach? (Get responses)

Think of the following examples about "supply" from scripture:

- How many men did Gideon need to defeat the Midianites? (300, **Judges 7:5-7**)
- How much funding did the disciples have when they went out two by two? (nothing, **Matthew 10:9-10**)
- How many people were fed with five loaves and two fish? (5000 plus women and children, **Matthew 14:21**)
- How much money did Jesus need to do His work on earth? (nothing)
- How much money did the early church need to grow from a few hundred to millions and millions in just a few decades after Jesus death and resurrection? (nothing)



What can we learn about ministry and outreach from these examples?



What do you need to start reaching out to the children in your community? (Give three minutes for participants to write down their needs. Have a few people share their lists.)

From the scripture examples, we know that money is not the issue in doing outreach. Who is your source of supply? God is the source of supply, and He is interested in helping us bring children to Christ. Are you ready to see how He will surprise you to meet your need?



Wrap Up & Prayer

5 min

Remember the parable of the Lost Sheep? **Matthew 18:14** says, "In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost." God's desire is for every child to know Him. The shepherd was willing to overcome every barrier until that sheep was safely found. What about us?

What are your biggest challenges right now when it comes to outreach? Is it the culture? Is it the language? Is it the families? Is it finances? Is it endurance? Is it your heart?



Take time in pairs to pray for each other. Pray about the challenges or the barriers that prevent us from reaching out to the lost. Pray for wisdom and strength to overcome these obstacles.

(Close in prayer.)