

# Bridges

I see bridges every day, living in the beautiful Roman city of Chester in England. There are bridges of all kinds, spanning the railway, the canal, and especially the River Dee which meanders through the city. There are only three bridges over the Dee in Chester, and each was built in a different century and for a different purpose. That said, ‘getting from A to B’ would sum up all three of them!

It is interesting to consider these bridges, and why and how they were built, as they help us to reflect on how we humans behave. Although we all have the same physical make-up, have similar needs and live on the same planet, we all have different reasons for acting in the varying ways that we do. These are sometimes our long-term goals in life, and at others just what is happening to us at the time.

Unless our motivation is God-guided, we can lose our focus and go the wrong way. We may even question what we are doing on the planet in the first place and, whether there is a purpose to it all anyway. Thinking about these bridges may help us stay ‘on track’.

## Follow a Pattern

Those who constructed the Old Dee Bridge in 1387 were well aware that their task was dangerous. There was a constant menace from the other side of the border, as this was the main crossing to Wales. At this time, the Welsh and the English were bitter enemies, fighting skirmishes up and down the border. There had actually

been a bridge here since Roman times, so the choice of site had already been made for them.

In our own lives, it is also sensible to keep alert in adverse circumstances, be they specific difficulties or the general threat of wandering away from God. The Bible shows how to follow the ways chosen by faithful people of old, and how God guides His people:

*So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them (Deuteronomy 28:14).*

*Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left (Isaiah 30:21).*



## Go the Right Way

In 1833, a second bridge was built as the main crossing to Wales, and it still serves that purpose. The Grosvenor Bridge is busy and often congested. It brings to mind Jesus’ words:

*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that*

*leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it (Matthew 7:13–14).*

In our modern busy lives we can find ourselves hurtling along, without giving ourselves time to reflect on what life is really about. The pressures of our everyday lives can become overwhelming, and we would do well to find space to think properly and take pleasure from the beauties of God's creation.

## **Appreciating God's Handiwork**

This reflection would be most likely to happen were we to make use of Chester's third bridge, the Suspension Bridge (see our front cover). Constructed in 1923, this footbridge replaced an earlier bridge, linking leafy suburbs with the city itself. I actually used this bridge on my daily walk to the railway station for my first job, and it was lovely to breathe in the fresh air, watch the swans on the river and see the flowers in nearby Grosvenor Park.



If we can keep our minds and hearts unpolluted in this stressful, often artifi-

cial world, taking time to wonder at the beauties of nature, we should feel refreshed and able to cope with the daily pressures of life. Being inspired by the natural world around us and seeing it as God's creation is one of the best therapies we could ever try!

These thoughts came back to me as I was preparing to run some puppet shows of Bible stories. Although these are aimed principally at children, the underlying messages can help us at any stage of our lives. I particularly remember the lines at the end of the puppet show about the wise and the foolish builders:

*Nowadays not many of us build houses but we do build lots of other things like friendships and hopes. If we build them on a firm foundation, then we will always be able to weather the storms of life. God and His teachings are a strong foundation to base your life on.*

Jesus put it like this:

*Whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock (Matthew 7:24–25).*

Building is a positive activity; it cannot ever be seen as passive. If we build a secure foundation in our lives by placing our faith in God, we are doing something positive to give our lives a purpose rather than just sitting back and hoping for the best. This is definitely a message for all ages!

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