

After the club meeting, we rushed into our favorite pub to a larger table, where a lone man was already sitting. He had a beer and a book in front of him. „Can we sit here?“ I say. „Sure.“ When I left the pub after an hour and a half, a friend asked me, „How did you get to such topics so quickly with total stranger?“ (to the relationship between him and his father, and then to Jesus, forgiveness, inviting Jesus to life and so on). Inspired by a friend’s question, I tried a little reconstruction of our conversation. One principle came out of it, which can be useful for you as well.

During the first two sentences after hanging up his coat, I quite easily found out that this new „George“, which was completely unknown to me, is on a four-day business trip in Ostrava. „What about you alone here with a book?“ I asked with a smile as I sat down by him. „Is it anything for work?“ „No, it’s like psychology.“ „Aha“ „It’s definitely not for work. I’m here as a programmer, dealing with some customer requirements.“ Over the next few tens of minutes, we easily touched topics as: work, travelling, languages, personal interests, family, and others. Just normal...

And the principle I discovered in that?

During a talk, I surf over various topics and look for connection.

When I find a match, **(a) I express joy and identification.** „That’s great, my brother is programming too, also my oldest son. It’s very interesting field...”

It is ideal when one of those random and unknown Georges starts asking me questions. Then, I can get to personal things easier and faster. Most of the time, however, Czech Georges don’t ask many questions; I’m glad they talk, at least. And for the most part, they like to do so! They found someone listening to them with genuine interest.

When such a George does not ask me himself, I continue to be patiently questioning.

However, I keep inserting small **(b) elements of my own experience or hints of my point.** „Did you say it was a psychology book? I have been interested in psychology since my youth, I studied even psychiatry for myself...” These small additions of mine usually produce some questions on George’s side.

Overall **(c), I am very careful not to disturb his comfort**, meaning his willingness to talk to me. „You came here to read and I’m disturbing you with questions?!“ „That’s fine,” an unknown George said, closing the book in front of him!

So in a talk, I surf over the topics and look for „resonance“. Whatever turns out to be a common theme, I use further; honestly, with interest and at the same time with my own openness. It naturally **(d) brings me to a certain range of topics I have thought through**, and I know from many conversations that they are quite universally interesting; and I can turn to them to Jesus early and naturally. For example, topics as: dads, children, relationships, communication, but also the topic of death, reincarnation and so on. Sometimes, someone opens a „spiritual“ topic themselves, though not quite a Christian one.

In the first phase I surf over the topics and look for connections, similarities. Wherever I can, I constantly express my interest and empathy. In the next phase, **(e) I go after deeper things**: „What’s it like for you?“ „How do you feel about that?“ „What does it mean to you?“ „Um, my dad wasn’t there for me at all, because he tragically died young.“ Even though I haven’t experienced what the new George is telling me, I can still express understanding or even sympathy.

And one more little secret of the success of such conversations: The initiative rather exceptionally comes from Georges! Therefore, at least initially **(f) I sensitively send out some stimuli**. When the response comes, it’s wonderful. And the response will come – in vast majority of cases! People are hungry for expressions of interest, respect or favor. I have enough all of that. And very honestly!

Lord Jesus, thank you that in Your ministry to people who surrounded you we can observe even this surfing over topics, expressing empathy and interest in deeper things!