

When the roofers were replacing stuff on our house, each of them had a wide belt with a hammer, a pliers, a nail crowbar, a curved knife, a tape measure, a pocket of nails, a tube of sealant, and something else... They used a crowbar for tearing the old roofing off, a sort of pneumatic hammer for pounding in the new roofing, and a tube for sealing around the edges and various joints.

I really liked that tool belt as an image of what we learn here in Bridges to people. I am presenting various tools to you that have proved to be very useful in many contacts with Czech non-believing people.

Among those proven tools you will find: the Christianese - that is, that we have to remove it from our vocabulary and replace with normal Czech when we speak to our unbelieving friends. I hope you have drawn your relational map and you keep it up to date - as you meet more and more people.

The spiritual conversation itself usually begins with a greeting and expression of interest. Soon it quite naturally leads to a short prayer for the person. And if that opens the door, a lightning story follows to show that Jesus is changing the lives of us ordinary people. This is usually a pretty normal and easy way to arrive to the bridge over the gap.

What a joy, when - now and then - someone actually crosses that Bridge, meaning surrenders their life to the Lord Jesus! Then I have other „tools“ on my belt, knowing quite exactly how to serve him, so that he can continue to follow the Lord and start sharing, soon. Since some of our trainees often didn't know how to move from one tool to the next, we usually emphasize connecting phrases between the tools. These actually became a kind of „tools“ as well. For example, if I have prayed briefly for my friend's need, I transition to the lightning story by saying: „You know, it really works with Jesus! There was a time in my life...“ (You understand that I'm not promising him a miracle. I'm just pointing out that Jesus made a specific difference in my life!)

I observed that our roofers needed three essential things to get quality results in their work:

- a) Quality **tools**
- b) The **skills** to handle the tools and - especially for various minor repairs - they needed
- c) **Discernment** of when to use which tool and skill.

In projecting the parable of the roofers onto our ministry to unbelievers, I see that set of

quality tools as very important. I mean tools that have been tested outdoors with real Czech unbelievers. On the one hand, it's very good to have tested and proven process: interest and prayer, lightning story, bridge over the gap, and so on according to the response. It's completely different feeling and flow of such a meeting when I have the elements naturally mastered. (Than when I used to „invent“ something complicated, hoping it would work.) On the other hand, in some situations, I have started with interest and invitation to Discovery. The lightning story and the bridge only followed when we met over the Word of God. Sometimes, I mean, I just pull a tool out of the kit depending on how I perceive the current need or open door. (Listening to the living Jesus is the best guide here!)

Once again, the three essentials for effective ministry to unbelievers:

- a) Tested and proven **tools** - I offer these to you here, step by step.
- b) mastery in **skills** - these are acquired simply by regular practice and, above all, abundant use in the field with unbelievers.
- c) ongoing **connection** to the living Jesus.

Thank You, Lord Jesus, for sending Your disciples out equipped with quality tools to put them into practice out there with people. And most importantly, you sent them equipped with the power of your commission, „Whoever hears you hears me...“ you told them. (Luke 10:16)