

Let me tell you a short story from our dear friend and mentor Steve Smith said in his book „T4T – Training for trainers“.

*Our long-term associate at a certain place with his team after seven years of diligent ministry saw no spiritual fruit. No new believers, no new groups. It was overwhelming for them! At a meeting, they shared that it was only in the eighth year when better results began to appear: several people accepted Jesus!*

*„What has changed?“ I asked, Steve Smith says.*

*My colleague replied with embarrassment, „We started sharing the Good News about Jesus.“*

*„Excuse me, what did you say?“*

*„We started sharing the Gospel!“*

*„And what did you do for the previous seven years?“*

*„Steve, for seven years we believed the lie that first we had to build relationships and then we could slowly reveal our Christian identity, share the Good News, and even challenge people to do something. Slowly we were clearing away the stones and „preparing the field for the Good News“. We shared bits of God’s truth, but never the Gospel itself. When we developed close relationships with these people, we were even more afraid to share Jesus: What if they rejected us?*

*After seven years without the slightest visible fruit, we were desperate enough to tell our friends the Gospel straight. Almost all of them rejected our message. That was the moment when we realized that building relationships alone got us nowhere. As the whole team, we agreed that from the next day on, we would share Jesus first and then – depending on the response – we decide with whom we would build relationship. We started sharing Jesus everywhere. We learned to get to the Good News topics with as many people as possible. Many did not respond, and many even rejected us harshly. However, gradually we heard an occasional ‚yes‘. These are the new believers through whom God is beginning to advance His kingdom.“*

To this authentic narrative, Steve Smith adds: *„These diligent and devoted people had been trying for seven years to do the work that only the Spirit of God can do. They called it ‚picking stones out of the field.‘ They thought that by building relationships without the Gospel, they would prepare the environment in the hearts of their people so that they could*

*then sow the Word of God into better soil.*

*However, despite the well-built relationships, they were rejected with the Good News.*

*Today, these people are convinced advocates of kind and sensitive yet very quick transition into spiritual conversations about Jesus. Whoever is not interested in our spiritual „hooks“ is not interested. But when they do, we know whom to give our full attention to.*

*Another team worked with a focus group hostile to anything Christian. The opposition was so strong that it would be very logical not to talk about Jesus at all; ever. But how do you find ready people without using spiritual means? So the team set up a „five minute rule“: „In every conversation with an unbeliever, within five minutes we reveal that we follow Jesus. If someone refuses, we're clear and OK. If he accepts, we offer the next steps. We may have found a person of peace who will open his house to God's Word!“*

So much a short retelling of the experience of our great mentor Steve Smith. These stories precisely describe our repeated Czech experience as well! Moms in one of our former communities started an open club for other moms with young children. Everything was great, they developed relationships, organized interesting programs and non-believing moms were happy to come... When the organizers gradually added more Christian elements, more „witnessing“, a surprisingly strong wave of resistance arose as to why they kept pushing the „faith“ there. Some felt deceived! And gradually the whole activity fell apart... Please understand correctly that this is not against building relationship. On the contrary! We build relationships very diligently and devotedly! But we try to make it clear as soon as possible whose we are and where we are going. That way we will soon know who is going with us on the road to Jesus and who is not...

*Lord Jesus, I ask you for the right focus of our attention on what is most important in our interactions with people...*