

A FREE GUIDE

Can You Tell Me About That?

One sentence, memorized today, so the next time you want to talk to somebody you are not building it from scratch while they stand there.

Somebody noticed a bracelet. That is the whole reason my friend Joseph runs a ministry in the Netherlands today.

Back then he was twenty one, at a community college in Oklahoma, in the worst year of his life. He had failed his first year and lost his scholarship. His dad, a pastor, had been asked to resign in front of the entire church. Two weeks earlier Joseph had prayed one honest prayer in the shower. An ultimatum, really. If you are really there, I need something, or I am out.

Then he is at an organizational fair on campus. He takes a break, wanders around, and a guy named Nathan notices the band bracelet on his wrist.

Hey, that seems pretty cool. Can you tell me about that band?

That is the whole opening move.

They talked for five minutes about a metal band called Underoath. Joseph told me the five minutes were not the point. The point was that somebody took a genuine interest in something nobody in his church world had ever cared about.

Nathan turned out to be a college pastor, and he invited Joseph to a Thursday night thing. Joseph said absolutely not, in language I am not going to print, then went on a full rant about how the church does not actually care about people.

Most of us put our hands up and back away right there. Nathan tilted his head and said, oh, that is interesting. I would love to hear your story. Can we go get coffee?

Joseph went, still angry. Nathan asked good questions and listened. At the end he did not say come to church and we will figure this out. He said, dude, that is really heavy. Can I pray for you?

The two lies that keep you quiet

Lie one. My words will come out wrong. They will not. It is very hard to mess up *hello, how are you.*

Lie two. They do not want to be bothered. Sometimes true. If somebody is scrolling or busy with their kid, leave them alone. But think about you. Is it actually a bother when someone talks to you? Usually it is the best part of the errand.

Three questions to keep loaded

The fix is not confidence. It is having something ready, so you are not building a sentence from scratch while somebody is standing there. I put mine on a note card.

1. Can you tell me about that?

Point it at whatever is actually in front of you. The bracelet, the book, the hat, the dog, the tools in the cart. You are not making conversation out of nothing. You are noticing.

2. What are you doing here today?

Works anywhere, because it is about the room you are both already standing in.

3. How old is he? How old is she?

If there is a kid or a dog, this one is free. People will talk about them all day.

AND THE FOLLOW UP LINE THAT DOES MOST OF THE WORK

Tell me more about that.

It takes a dead answer and opens it back up, it costs you nothing, and it means you do not have to think of a second question while you are still listening to the first.

Before you talk yourself out of it

Joseph almost skipped that coffee. He was bitter about what the church had done to his family, and he had every reason to be. He went anyway, and it is the reason he has the life he has now.

You do not get to know in advance which conversation is which. That is not your job to know. Your job is the one sentence.

Pick one of the three questions and use it before you go to bed tonight.

If this helped, there is a free companion guide that goes chapter by chapter with reflection questions and action steps. No catch.

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