

## Talking about Jesus: The Role of Small Talk By Bob Young

Sherrod and Phyllis Miller (*Couples Communication*), in their analysis of communication styles describe shop talk, straight talk, search talk, small talk, and control talk. I am intrigued about the role various communication styles can play in effective evangelism. Recently, Eugene Peterson used a phrase that caught my attention: “what we talk about while we're preparing the way for Jesus to join the conversation.”

His illustration helped me think about the role of small talk in evangelism. Enjoy the words of Peterson in his unique style:

My pastor, during my adolescent years, came often to our home. After a brief and awkward interval, he always said, "And how are things in your SOUL today?" (He always pronounced "soul" in capital letters). I never said much. I was too intimidated. The thoughts and experiences that filled my life in those years seemed small potatoes after that question. I knew, of course, that if I ever wanted to discuss matters of SOUL, I could go to him. But for everything else, I would probably do better with someone who wouldn't brush aside as worldly vanity what it felt like to get cut from the basketball varsity, someone who wouldn't pounce with scary intimations of hellfire on the thoughts I was having about Marnie Schmidt, the new girl from California.

Pastoral work, I learned later, is that aspect of Christian ministry that specializes in the ordinary. It is the nature of pastoral life to be attentive to, immersed in, and appreciative of the everyday texture of people's lives....

What DO we talk about why we wait for Jesus to show up in a conversation? To help us with our small talk, I have developed 41 questions that I call “Spiritual Conversation Starters.” Many of the questions do not seem all that spiritual—but remember that many times small talk is also search talk. For those interested in more ways to talk about Jesus, here’s the link:

<http://www.bobyoungresources.com/ministry/spiritual-conversation-starters-HO.pdf>