

Kindly Listen!

Bob seems to talk more to strangers than anyone else. He is not shy and will just randomly talk to anyone we are near at the market, in the line at the movie, sitting in church, and everywhere. I usually just cringe and try to get him to stop by tapping him on the arm. It doesn't work. He can totally ignore my little taps and keep on talking. I don't know why it stresses me so but it's usually because I think that people don't want to be approached by a stranger. Plus I'm terrified on what he might say!

He often starts with something like "I hope it's not too personal to ask you this but..." That scares me, why would he ask something that he thinks is too personal? Usually it's not personal and everyone gets a chuckle out of his question. Like how do you pronounce your name (if he's read it on a name tag)! Sometimes they are personal questions such as "are you older than me?" That's a good one, especially when the person is obviously MUCH younger. I've tried to impress upon him that he doesn't need to wonder (out loud!) about the age of older men and women but he just doesn't seem to be able to keep that to himself.

Hair is another big topic with strangers. When he sees a young child he will tell them that he likes their hair and then he will take off his baseball cap to show his bald head. Most 1 year olds don't get the joke but he says it all the time. ALL the time. Most parents will just smile and say thank you and hurry on. They usually scatter! This is when I try to talk about personal space and boundaries. To no avail!

Bob often sees people that he thinks are people he knows. Yesterday at a Denny's Restaurant he stopped and talked to a man who he thought he have worked with on the Police Department. The man was probably 30 years younger than Bob so it wasn't a very realistic connection. Bob chit-chatted with

the man while I hurried on to pay the bill and get out of hearing range. A few hours later at the Model Train Museum in Balboa Park, he sees a man and is 100% sure that it's the same man. He hollers "hi Burt" to the man and the man tells him that his name is not Burt. Bob talks with him a while and tells him how good it was to see him again. That man looked totally confused as he should have. He was not the same man. Bob still thinks it was his old friend Burt! Who is Burt?!

Bob will pull out his Fit-Bit step counter (he has the old-school model that you carry in your pocket) and show the steps that he has taken that day to anyone and everyone that might look his way. In addition, he'll tell them that he had a chest surgery (never does he say heart surgery) and he has three doctors that have told him to get in his 10,000 daily steps. If they haven't run off by now he'll give them updates on his latest doctor appointments. I left our table recently at a café to pay the bill at the front counter and I waited and waited for him to join me at the front. I went back inside the dining room to see where he was and he was showing his fit-bit to a table of 4 that was dining next to us. He told me that they asked him for his advice on how to count their steps. Funny thing, I had heard this family talking during the time that we were seated next to them and they were NOT speaking English. I can't even imagine that they struck up the conversation with him or that they had asked him for Fit-Bit advice! I think he just had an urge to show his Fit-Bit and chat a little!!

Bob has several pins on his hat. An American flag and a small police badge replica. Bob tells me that he people come up and talk to him because they see these badges and like them! What really happens is that he'll start talking to the person next to him and he will point out his badge and tell them that he was a policeman. And that opens the door for him to talk more and more about himself. If the person does get a word in, Bob doesn't hear it or remember what they said. He only

wants to talk! Recently, he told a couple at the movie that he was retired from the SDPD and he rambled on a bit. They told him a few things (which I overheard). Later I asked him he found it unusual that they both had degrees in Criminal Justice Administration and he said that he didn't hear that. He talks to talk. Not to carry on a conversation.

Just last week, he told a waiter that the friends we were dining with were his golfing buddies that he had worked with on the Police Department. The waiter was so excited to hear that and told Bob that he wanted to be a police officer and had an application in right now. Pretty cool conversation that Bob didn't catch any of. He didn't respond or even catch that comment. When I mentioned it to him later after we had left, he was so surprised.

More and more men with beards and glasses remind him of our son Kyle. Now instead of just pointing them out to me, he wants to talk to them and tell them of their resemblance to Kyle. Or he wants to holler it across a room or wave to the man on the freeway in the car next to us. Last Sunday, it was the guest worship leader in church that was a twin to Kyle (NOT!) and I was so nervous that Bob was going to scream out in church! Instead he just told the people sitting around us. Several times and rather loudly.

This month's most common story that Bob tells strangers, check-out clerks, delivery men, repair guys, and anyone else is that his daughter turned 60! He loves their reaction when they declare that he just can't be old enough to have a 60-year-old daughter. That opens the door for him to talk about having a son 61 and a son 29. **Everyone kindly listens.**

So I guess that's my story. **Everyone kindly listens to him.** Thank you to those strangers (and friends and family) that have listened to his stories and smiled and listened. Thanks for giving him grace and kindness.

And for me, May God give me the patience and wisdom to deal with our ever-changing and challenging life. And to kindly listen to Bob.

Bob and his daughter Julie—this is what 60 and 80 look like!
WOW!!!

