

God Space Workshop – SN, 2.28.10

Doug Pollock in [God Space](#) tells about doing an evangelism training seminar at a church, at the end of which he asked for volunteers to join him on a visit to a local bar to practice the lessons they just learned. The only taker was the pastor (and believe me, he had to volunteer).

I think the response would be different at our church, especially if a charismatic outsider stood up here and gave you confidence that he really knew what he was doing. I think several of you would volunteer in a second, and the minister (me) would be among the more nervous.

When Pollock asked them why they wouldn't go, they listed the sins and sinners they would encounter at the bar. Too much drinking or smoke or raucous behavior, etc. Then he asked them to raise their hands if they would be pleased if everyone in that bar tonight would show up for church the following Sunday. Of course every hand went up.

Then he asked them: "Who do you think is going to make the first move?"

One of our core values is: "Lost people matter to God, so they matter to us." We believe the Great Commission applies to our own town and country as much as it does Israel or Mongolia. So what holds us back?

I understand the fear associated with going to any strange place, but Pollock says that even that fear teaches a lesson. Meditate on this: "How out-of-place would I feel in a biker bar? Or a redneck beer joint?" That's how out-of-place many of the customers would feel at church.

Pollock went to the bar that night with the pastor and his wife, and spent a couple of productive hours there. They began by introducing themselves with Pollock explaining that he was in town doing a conference for a church, and asking for their help with some research. He met a group of four young people and he asked them a simple question that has a lot of power to open up doors: "What has turned you off about church?" I suspect a question like that could start many spiritual conversations with people who seem quite hardened to evangelism – IF we are willing to ask...and listen.

Here's what happened: **(First 3 paragraphs of p. 14)**

Thomas Rainer says that 95% of the ministries of an average church are for insiders – Christians from our own church along with ones from other churches who might drop by. We think that our ministries are open to all, and they are in the sense that if someone gets desperate enough to come, the door is unlocked. Of course the problem is that they don't make any connection between their desperation and our church, and besides they aren't all that desperate.

Now, what's the easiest way for someone to come here for a visit? Let's say that there is some kind of meeting in the community, maybe political or maybe a discussion about traveling to India, etc. It's advertised as open to the public and you'd kind of like to go, but it is in some odd place – the back of a store you've never heard of, or in someone's barn. Some of you are bold enough to stroll right in. It would be tough for me. But what would make it easier?

If a friend invited you. Hence the importance of inviting people to church, which some of you are very good at, very faithful in doing.

The problem is that we hang around people like us, and gradually most of the people we know either are Christians already, or they've heard it all before from us (family and co-workers for instance).

If only we could cross some boundaries to reach other people, and if only we could reopen some of those closed conversations with family members.

Where is your heart? Self-evaluation quiz on screen. Spend 10-15 seconds looking at each question. (These are from *God Space*, and I understand if you think some of them might seem like a too soft approach. If that's the case for a particular question, consider that the person you're dealing with has heard the facts of heaven, hell, judgment and the Gospel – they haven't responded – so you're not neglecting a soul that has never heard). **Roll it.**

What we are going to talk about tonight might be called pre-evangelism. Remember that this is about your brother who has heard it all before, or else a new acquaintance that you're fishing with or working with. The idea isn't to get in a Gospel presentation unless the Holy Spirit opens the door, but rather to create a space where the other person can talk about God. As in the bar illustration, that might clear away a lot of debris that stands in the way of actually talking about Christ and salvation.

Demonstration: For the next five minutes, DP and I will demonstrate what a God Space conversation might look like. After our demonstration, we are going to ask you get together with one or two others and respond to our conversation in a specific way, so pay attention!

Dave plays himself

I'm a new neighbor and David and Sharran invited us over for supper and now he and I are on the front porch visiting.

All David knows about me is that I'm an accountant in Knoxville and I don't go to church, and in fact I seemed a little uncomfortable when he first told me he was a preacher.

Post-conversation exercise: In groups of 2 or 3, discuss things that might have killed that spiritual conversation dead in its tracks. For example, if David had called me an idiot in the first 30 seconds, that might have caused me to shut down! What are some other, less obvious and more likely things that can kill a spiritual conversation – things you've done or had done to you perhaps?

4 minutes and then we will report.

From the book: An unbelieving heart (I don't expect anything good to happen); pre-conversation history (they've been so badly hurt, it's going to be very hard); awkward transitions (Mormon missionaries on your door step trying to get you talking about the deepest part of your life in the first two minutes); Christianese; disrespect, an agenda (we should have an ultimate motive but not an ulterior one; control (my goal is to steer the conversation...which makes it a sales pitch, not a conversation); judgment; combativeness; it's all about me.