

Revised Edition

GOD SPACE

WHERE SPIRITUAL
CONVERSATIONS HAPPEN
NATURALLY



DOUG POLLOCK

WHAT OTHERS ARE
SAYING ABOUT

GOD SPACE

“As I’ve spoken to thousands of people regarding externally focused living, the missing piece I’ve identified is the type of conversation that helps turn good deeds and good will into good news for this generation. Through genuine concern, coupled with curiosity and questions, Doug, through Scripture, story, and experiences (both positive and negative) presents attractive and compelling ways to engage others in conversations that change lives for eternity.”

—Eric Swanson
Co-Author of *The Externally Focused Church* and *Living a Life on Loan*

“Conversations involving evangelism are increasingly difficult—for seeker and would-be evangelist alike. Lots of us have tried to make a contribution to this challenge. Doug Pollock has actually done so. *God Space* is wide-ranging but easily grasped; honest to the challenge, but loaded with doable actions and thus hope.”

—Todd Hunter
Church Planter, Anglican Mission in the Americas; Former Executive Director, Alpha USA; and Former President, Vineyard USA

“When we share with another our relationship with Jesus, we share the most precious gift we could ever receive. Why are we often reluctant,

even fearful, to share this wonderful gift? Part of the answer must lie in the fact that most of us have never taken the time to intentionally prepare to be effective witnesses for Jesus, the lover of our souls. Doug Pollock has drawn from his years of compassion for the lost to help any follower of Jesus become a more effective laborer in the harvest. This book guides us to the awareness that every encounter is a divine opportunity to sow a seed of the gospel and, through practical examples and useful tools, equips us to share the hope that lies within us.”

—David Long
President, OMS International

“Doug Pollock’s *God Space* is a jam-packed guidebook on the new apologetic: listening, noticing, and serving while leading others to the mercy of God. The chapter with “99 wondering questions” is invaluable for those of us weary of parroting formulaic answers in the oft-typical sales approach of evangelical Christianity. Doug is a practitioner, not a theoretician; these ideas and stories are borne from real-life experiences. That alone makes it well worth the read!”

—Dave Workman
Author of *The Outward-Focused Life*; Senior Pastor, Vineyard Community Church, Cincinnati, Ohio

GOD SPACE continued

“What would happen if Christians left their ‘clubs’ and went out into the world to create high-grace places where conversation flowed freely and people could voice their questions about life? In *God Space*, author Doug Pollock offers readers his experience and real-life stories of doing exactly that. As he actively wonders with people, we are drawn into his passion for reaching people far from God. But Pollock does something few writers do—he leaves us believing that we, too, can wonder into people’s hearts and ultimately help them wonder their way to God. Doug Pollock has given the church an authentic and invaluable tool for reaching and connecting to the hearts of people.”

—Lindy Lowry
Senior Editor,
Outreach magazine

“If you are looking for a down-to-earth coach to give you the practical help you need to make the most of the encounters God brings your way, Doug Pollock is one of the best there is. His insights are warm, witty—and so true! If you apply the teaching of this book, you will never need to attend another evangelism training program. Guaranteed.”

—Howard Webb
Love Your Neighbour Network,
New Zealand

“God Space: It’s a place where day-to-day relationships and remarkably refreshing spiritual conversations meet. In *God Space*, Doug Pollock provides everything we need to engage with others in seeking, asking, and knocking on God’s door to get the everlasting directions we all need.”

—Dave Ping
CEO, Equipping Ministries
International; Co-author of *Outflow*

“I’ve had the privilege of traveling with Doug and seeing him create God Space in person. Doug is a practitioner who passionately provokes and nudges the people who cross his path to question, to examine, to wonder, and to journey forward toward Jesus. The timeless concepts in each chapter are eye-opening, learnable, practical, and doable, which helps readers to apply and experience God Space for themselves. I know, because I’ve had the opportunity to teach God Space in a small group setting. I can say without hesitation God Space works!”

—Steve Bowen
Outreach Pastor, Vineyard Church,
Dayton, Ohio

GOD

REVISED EDITION

SPACE

WHERE SPIRITUAL
CONVERSATIONS HAPPEN
NATURALLY

**DOUG
POLLOCK**

Group

Loveland, Colorado
group.com



Group resources really work!

This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's:

Relational

Person-to-person interaction enhances spiritual growth and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential

What we experience through action and discussion sticks with us up to 9 times longer than what we simply hear or read.

Applicable

The aim of ministry is to equip people to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

Lifelong

Experiences transform the heart, moving faith beyond the walls of church and into everyday life for years to come.

GOD SPACE (REVISED EDITION)

WHERE SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS HAPPEN NATURALLY

Doug Pollock

Copyright © 2009, 2025 Doug Pollock

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without prior written permission from the publisher, except where noted in the text and in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, visit group.com/permissions.

"How Well Do You Listen?" on pages 56-57 and "Reflective Listening Phrases" beginning on page 60 are reprinted with the permission of Equipping Ministries International, Cincinnati, Ohio, equippingministries.org

The "99 Wondering Questions" beginning on page 108 are adapted from *Irresistible Evangelism* copyright © Steve Sjogren, Dave Ping, and Doug Pollock.

Parts of Chapter 8 were originally published in the March/April 2007 issue of Outreach magazine and are reprinted by permission.

Parts of Chapter 10 were originally published in the July/August 2005 issue of Outreach magazine and are reprinted by permission.

Visit our website: group.com

Credits

Senior Editor: Candace McMahan

Editor: Carl Simmons

Chief Creative Officer: Joani Schultz

Copy Editors: Zach Carlson, Lyndsay Gerwing

Art Director: Paul Povolni, Jeff A. Storm

Cover Photographer: Rodney Stewart

Cover Design: Stephen Caine

Book Designer: Jean Bruns, Karlie Pape

Production Manager: DeAnne Lear

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pollock, Doug, 1957-

God space : where spiritual conversations happen naturally / Doug Pollock.

Description: Revised edition. | Loveland : Group Publishing, [2025]

Identifiers: LCCN 2024053638 (print) | LCCN 2024053639 (ebook) | ISBN

9781470779535 (paperback) | ISBN 9781470779658 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Evangelistic work.

Classification: LCC BV3790 .P595 2025 (print) | LCC BV3790 (ebook) | DDC

248/.5--dc23/eng/20250215

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024053638>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024053639>

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 30 29 28 27 26 25

Printed in the United States of America.

GOD | SPACE

Contents

INTRODUCTION	9
CHAPTER 1 Creating God Space.	12
CHAPTER 2 Spiritual Conversation-Killers.	26
CHAPTER 3 Noticing Your Way Into Spiritual Conversations.	38
CHAPTER 4 Serving Your Way Into Spiritual Conversations.	47
CHAPTER 5 Listening Your Way Into Spiritual Conversations	57
CHAPTER 6 Wondering Your Way Into Spiritual Conversations	73
CHAPTER 7 God’s Teeter-Totter	84
CHAPTER 8 Spiritual Appetizers.	89
CHAPTER 9 Bringing the Bible Into Your Conversations	96
CHAPTER 10 Reclaiming Missed Opportunities Rebuilding Burned Bridges	111
CHAPTER 11 Reflective Practitioners.	118
CHAPTER 12 More Conversations Like This.	137
EPILOGUE: The Perfect Fit	142
Booking a <i>God Space</i> Event	146

GOD

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Christ-followers all over the world who long to see the quality and quantity of their spiritual conversations increase in natural and doable ways.

It is also dedicated to leaders who long to see God's people leave the church on Sunday to be the church from Monday through Saturday. It's my desire that these tangible expressions of how to live outwardly focused lives in an inwardly focused world will help you create churches without walls, raising up people who are not only giving to missions, but are also given to mission right where they work and live.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to my ministry supporters who have sacrificially given so that I could share God's good news with people in over 40 different countries, and almost every state in the U.S. Your ongoing commitment has provided me a wealth of experiences from which to write this book. Our partnership has paved the way for multitudes of people to be introduced to God's Kingdom. Only God knows how many more will come to know him as a result of the spiritual conversations sparked by this book.

A special word of thanks to Denny and Peggy Hicks for allowing me to use their remote cabin in the country to finish my writing, and to all my friends, too numerous to mention, who provided valuable feedback in refining the book you now have in your hands.

I'd also like to recognize Panera Bread bakery-cafes around the country. You get my vote for the best place to write a book while on the road. I love your food and atmosphere.

Thanks as well to the folks at Group Publishing, who year after year create avenues for people who think and care deeply about advancing the Kingdom of God. I am grateful for our partnership. I especially want to thank my editor, Candace McMahan, who prayed me through the ups and downs of writing this book.

Finally, I thank my wife, Martha, and my two sons, David and Jonathan. Writing this book required me to set apart time from each of you that I can never have back. I'm hoping that you'll each find something in here to help you in the multitudes of relational connections you'll have over your lifetimes. It will make the trade-off so much more worthwhile. Thanks for your love and support through it all.

Author's Note: The stories you will read throughout this book happened with real people in real time. Because of the personal nature of these stories, I have changed the names out of sensitivity and respect to all involved.

Introduction

If you want to increase the quantity and quality of your spiritual conversations, or don't feel competent or confident enough to even begin a spiritual conversation, read on. You'll find practical stories that reveal solid biblical principles for engaging people in spiritual conversations.

If you're looking for a formula, a method, or the latest evangelistic road map, you won't find it here. I've been there and done that! Methods and road maps, while useful for a while, eventually become obsolete as times change.

I believe God has given us eternal principles that will never change for engaging the hearts and minds of others. When you discover and apply these timeless principles, you will be able to create safe space or God Space for spiritual conversations to happen naturally no matter where you live in the world.

If you prefer to read little and apply much, and lean toward the practical over the theoretical, I'm faith confident you'll find this book to be everything you're hoping for. You'll find prayers to offer, books to read, questions to answer, movie clips to watch, Scriptures to meditate on, quotes to memorize, faith experiments to try, and applications to make. All of these ideas are intended to help you make the journey from information to transformation happen.

So if you're ready to learn how to create God Space, pour a cup of coffee and read on. Before long, you'll begin to realize just how "doable" it really is to start and have meaningful God conversations with the people in your life.

Author's Disclaimer

I had a difficult decision to make as I scrutinized every word that I wrote back in 2009 in this refresh of *God Space*. What do I do with the quotes in this book made by well-known Christian leaders who have since made choices that do not reflect Jesus well? What would you do?

It would have been much easier to delete them to remove the possibility of being misunderstood, but I decided to leave them in for a reason. If God edited everyone from the Bible who fell short of his standards, only Jesus would remain. God has chosen and continues to choose to use broken and flawed people to advance his Kingdom. I decided to do no less.

The quotes I chose to use back in 2009 are no less true today than they were back then. This is not an endorsement of what these leaders did, but an acknowledgment of the Holy Spirit's work through all of us, in spite of our humanity. Let us all be sobered, remembering that we, too, are prone to wander if we are not daily filled, directed, and empowered by God's Spirit.

CHAPTER 1

Creating God Space

Paul and Lisa, a young married couple, were heading home to celebrate Christmas with Lisa's side of the family. Three years earlier, after a rocky first year of marriage, Paul and Lisa had realized they needed something greater than themselves to make their marriage work. They discovered an older married couple who helped them realize that if Jesus were in control of their lives, he could help the two of them become one.

As they grew in their newfound faith, they began to realize that no one else in their entire family system believed in Jesus the way they did. Nevertheless, neither Paul nor Lisa felt confident or competent enough to talk about the very faith that had turned their lives and marriage around. They had the desire, and even saw the need, but they didn't know how to start a God conversation, so they didn't. However, they were determined to change all that, this Christmas. As they neared their destination, Paul and Lisa's sense of inadequacy and fear of failure drove them into a time of prayer.

If you'd been sitting in the back seat of their car that day, and Paul and Lisa had turned around after their prayer time and asked you for advice on how to bring up the topic of faith, what would you have told them? How do you start a spiritual conversation with family, friends, or co-workers without turning them off or creating a very awkward moment?

Keep thinking about this question, for it's a very important one. But for now, let's dive back into our story to find out what Paul and Lisa did.

On Christmas Day, after all the gifts were opened, Paul and Lisa were casually sitting around, catching up with Lisa's younger sister, Karen. Paul and Lisa had heard that Karen was into some kind of New Age religion she

had discovered through friends in college. When Paul and Lisa asked her how things were going, Karen excitedly told them that she was on a spiritual high due to an angel that had recently appeared to her in a dream.

This was the opportunity Paul and Lisa had been looking and praying for. Before Karen even had a chance to share what the angel had told her, Lisa hijacked the conversation. She passionately informed her sister that Scripture says the devil masquerades as the angel of light—that she didn’t know what she was messing around with.

Once Lisa had finished her sermonette, she tagged out, and Paul tagged in. He made sure Karen understood that her New Age religion was akin to witchcraft. Paul felt a surge of confidence and power as he pronounced “Capital T” truths he was convinced Karen needed to hear.

After Paul and Lisa finished double-teaming Karen, the room was filled with tension followed by an awkward silence. The conversation was over before it ever began. Karen got up and left the room. Paul and Lisa had wounded her so deeply that Karen refused to speak to them the rest of the day. What’s more, when Karen told the rest of the family how she had been disrespected, parented, judged, and essentially labeled as a witch, a family verdict was quickly reached. Paul and Lisa were now sentenced to wear the “Scarlet F” (reserved for religious Fanatics in a family).

Paul and Lisa drove home defeated and discouraged. The very thing they had feared the most had happened. This experience made it easy for them to become a part of the silent majority who keep their faith to themselves.

Karen and the rest of Lisa’s family, on the other hand, came to an entirely different conclusion. They decided that the only way to have a safe conversation with a Christian is to make sure you say things you know they’ll agree with—otherwise you’ll be told why you’re wrong and they’re right. Rather than risk another awkward outcome, the whole family agreed not to talk about religion around Paul and Lisa again. Paul and Lisa’s good intentions produced nothing more than hurt feelings, and a resolve on both sides to leave spiritual conversations alone.

A SAFE PLACE

I often wonder what would happen if—instead of all-too-common occurrences like the one above—the body of Christ could create low-risk, high-grace places for people to pursue their need to have spiritual

conversations. According to Ecclesiastes 3:11, God has given us all an inner drive to know and be known by him. St. Augustine so brilliantly captured this thought when he wrote in his Confessions, “Our heart is not quiet until it rests in Thee.” Where does an unquiet heart like Karen’s go these days to safely share this yearning to know and be known by the Creator?

For most Christians, the answer is a no-brainer: It’s the local church, of course! Unfortunately, this is not the word on the street. For many who grew up outside the walls of the church, going to church is a scary proposition.

I was reminded of this when I met the owner of a Japanese steakhouse in Fort Collins, Colorado, through a mutual friend. He came over to my friend’s house to play table tennis. We were having such a good time that when he asked me what I did for a living, I did something I rarely do with a stranger: I invited him to come to church with me the next morning. I explained that I had been invited to Fort Collins to preach at a church, and if he wanted to experience firsthand what I do for a living, he was welcome to come join me. In strongly accented English, he quickly replied, “Oh, no, Mr. Doug, I too full of sin.” My heart broke to hear him so eloquently express in broken English what millions have made abundantly clear. The church has become a scary place for people who are “too full of sin.”

RAISING THE BAR—BY LOWERING IT

This point became crystal clear to me in Idaho. I was invited to do a workshop in a small town north of Boise by several local churches that were trying to figure out how to effectively engage their community with God’s good news. After a couple of hours of teaching on Friday night, I challenged everyone in the audience to head down to the local bar with my wife and me to apply what we’d just learned.

I was shocked by the response. Only one hand was raised. The pastor responsible for arranging my visit knew I wasn’t going to let *him* off the hook, so it was no surprise to see *his* hand. As I probed to understand why these good-hearted people had unanimously declined my offer, they described the bar as a place for carousing, dirty jokes, swearing, drunkenness, smoking... the list went on until the “filthy five,” “nasty nine,” and “dirty dozen” had all been covered.

For many, going to church is as scary as going to a hard-core biker bar might be to Christians.

After they finished sharing, I said, “It sounds like you’re describing a bar to me. You didn’t expect them to be singing ‘Amazing Grace’ and baptizing people with Bud Light down there, did you? Did Jesus call us to fish from the bank, or to swim with the fish, when he told us to go into all the world?” He made it abundantly clear in Matthew 10:16 that “he is sending us out like sheep among wolves.”

I followed up these thoughts with this question: “How many of you would like to see the people at the bar come to church on Sunday morning?” All hands were raised.

I then asked politely, “Who do you think is going to make the first move? If I go down to the bar and make the same invitation to them that I made to you, how many bar hoppers do you think would be willing to leave their ‘club’ to join your ‘club’ on Sunday morning? What would compel someone to give up what he or she likes to do most on Sunday morning, borrow a suit and tie or put on a fancy dress and sing songs to somebody you can’t see, have someone speak at you for 30 to 45 minutes about someone who lived more than 2,000 years ago, and then pay for the experience with something called an offering? And if you’re really lucky and pick the right Sunday, you might get to drink the blood and eat the body of Jesus. How many takers do you think I’d have?”

I thought my stirring speech would surely move a few people to “be the church” down at the local bar that night, but no one budged. I’m opposed to using guilt and shame as crowbars to move God’s people, so I ended by asking them to pray for their pastor, my wife, and I because we were going for it.

STEPPING OUT

As I walked away from the church, the Holy Spirit prompted me to ask my pastor friend if he had a video camera. I figured that the only way to help this group of Christians create “God Space” was to show them what it really looks like.

Fifteen minutes later, I introduced myself to a group of four young people. I explained why I was in town and asked if they’d be willing to answer some questions about their experiences with the church. I encouraged them

to keep it real because I'd be showing the video of our conversation the next day at my workshop. More than two hours later, the pastor, my wife, and I all headed home from the bar after an exhilarating dialogue.

The flow of the conversation that evening went something like this: For the first 45 minutes I listened to this group share from their hearts about what had turned them off to church. As I listened, I got in touch with some of the things I had begun to wonder about, and at the appropriate time, I released my curiosity into the conversation. These wondering questions (more about this in Chapter 6) stimulated their spiritual curiosity and opened the door for us to talk about spiritual matters. After an hour or so, they felt safe enough to ask their own questions about faith.

By the time our heart-to-heart exchange had ended, they asked me if it's possible to know for sure if they would end up in heaven. I had the privilege of sharing my faith story and the good news of the gospel with them. God's mail had been hand-delivered to the spiritual address at which they were currently living! (If you want to see what happened for yourself, I still have the video clip. All you have to do is request to see it at one of my workshops. My schedule is posted on my website at GodsGPS.com.)

The next morning, the people in my workshop were astonished by what they saw and heard on the video. God Space had been created in a place they had written off as the devil's playground. All I did was show up, jump on "God's teeter-totter" (more on that in Chapter 7), and follow the Spirit's lead.

THE FIRST MOVE

Both Christians and non-Christians have very real perceptions about one another that keep us from interacting in redeeming ways. It's been said that the only thing more difficult than getting the church to go to the world is getting the world to come to us. If showing up at each other's club is too scary for so many people, is there a way to create space in our daily interactions that might tear down some of the walls that keep us polarized?

I believe God wants Christians to make the first move. If I had chosen to stay at my club that night rather than head toward their club, nothing would have happened.

I firmly believe that if the American church doesn't add more away games to its heavily dominated home game schedule, we'll eventually find ourselves in the same spiritual state as Canada or Europe. The local church

used to be the heart and soul of the community. Those days are slipping away fast, as church attendance continues to drop year after year nationwide. Today many churches need to face the cold, hard fact that if they closed their doors tomorrow, no one in the community would miss them. It's as if we've forgotten that the early church in the book of Acts existed primarily for those who were *not-yet* Christ-followers.

Thom S. Rainer's research, documented in "Seven Sins of Dying Churches," supports this harsh reality. In a survey of churches across the U.S., he found that 95 percent of the ministries within the church are for church members alone. This statistic hit me like a baseball bat. I've had numerous experiences that have confirmed this inwardly focused mentality. The one that stands out best in my mind occurred during one of my many workshops worldwide.

After I'd asked whether the church's budget reflected the heart of Jesus, one of the church leaders did some quick math to convert what I was saying into the bottom line. He had added the pastors' salaries, church employees' salaries, and all the other costs of keeping the church doors open. Then he'd divided that sum by the number of converts in the church's past year of ministry. He announced that in the past year, it had cost the church \$440,000 per convert. Ouch! Now please understand that "everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted." (We can thank the famous "theologian" Albert Einstein for that insightful quote.) Nevertheless, it's hard to deny that many churches exist primarily to keep their club members happy. Which is why the average church in any given year cannot report a single person who has come to faith through its ministries.

*It's as if we've forgotten that the early church
in the book of Acts existed primarily for those
who were not-yet Christ-followers.*

Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, is even more piercing: "The church that doesn't want to grow is saying to the world, 'You can go to hell.' " Disturbing, isn't it? Nevertheless, many churches continue to operate essentially as clubs, convinced they'd be letting God down if they closed up shop and sold their buildings.

Don't get me wrong; I care deeply about the church. The bride of Christ is the hope of the world. "Bride bashing" is not my thing. However, I also care deeply about the people God misses the most—those who need a safe space to ask their questions, share their doubts, voice their concerns, and even vent their anger toward God and the church. They need space to bring their real selves out into the light, to journey one "aha" at a time toward the cross. If not-yet-Christians are convinced the church is not a safe space to experience community or inquire about their spiritual yearnings, where *is* that space? And what does that look like in a world that increasingly says no to our traditional God Spaces?

START FROM THE HEART

If we're going to create God Space for others, it has to start inside *us*. God has to do something in us before he can do something through us. It takes safe people to create safe places. First Corinthians 6:19 says that when we become Christians, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. But Jesus did not send the Holy Spirit to simply *reside in* our bodies but to *preside over* them.

*If we're going to create God Space for others,
it has to start inside us. God has to do some-
thing in us before he can do something through
us. It takes safe people to create safe places.*

Unfortunately, we're naturally predisposed toward resisting this holy takeover. *My* space, *my* desires, *my* needs, *my* money, *my* time—this "me, myself, and I" list of entitlements goes on forever. God wants to deliver us from this way of thinking. God Space begins where the natural gives way to the supernatural. We're urged, in Romans 12:1, to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. We can't create God Space until we've allowed God to create space in us first. The following story illustrates this truth.

MY AIRPLANE STORY

For 10 years, I served as ministry director for the Athletes in Action basketball team. During the fall, our team played college-basketball

powerhouses like Duke, North Carolina, UCLA, Indiana, and Kentucky. At halftime or right after the game, our team was given the opportunity to share with the crowd how Christ had made a difference in our lives. Our travel schedule was usually horrendous, as we flew from city to city to play these schools before the regular season. Late nights and early mornings were all part of being on the road with AIA.

One particular season, our team played seven games in seven nights. After the sixth game, I was exhausted. The next morning we headed to the airport to catch a 6 a.m. flight. I waited until the very last minute to board so I could occupy a row with no one else in it, stretch out, and catch a nap before we landed. I found several pillows, pulled down the window shade, stretched out, and began to enjoy the rest that my mind and body needed.

Just then I heard the flight attendant exhort a passenger to hurry because the plane was about to leave. The next thing I knew, the extrovert of all extroverts was asking for her seat on the aisle in the row I was trying to sleep in. I sat up and repositioned myself so she could sit down and I could go back to sleep. However, this was not what God had in mind.

Dianne introduced herself and asked me if I knew which basketball team was on board. I answered her as quickly as possible and lapsed back into a semi-comatose state. Dianne apparently did not have a grasp of the obvious, as she began to pepper me with questions about *Athletes in Action*. Her barrage of questions was stirring up a civil war within me. I prayed, "Please, God, I want to be off the clock for a while. I do not want to talk with this lady, let alone be your ambassador to her."

I don't know about you, but I never seem to wrestle with God and win. God wanted me to create space for him to work in this encounter. It's taken me a long time to truly understand what Jesus meant when he tells us that we must lose daily if we are going to truly win (Luke 9:23). This death to self—*my* space—is where God Space begins to form. This is exactly what happened that day. I eventually gave in and allowed God to have his way in and through me. It didn't take long before the Holy Spirit began to guide me into Dianne's life.

I had no idea where the conversation would lead. After five minutes of everyday pleasantries, I learned that Dianne's passion was art. She excitedly shared her lifelong aspiration to move to Santa Fe and open her own art studio. I wondered aloud what was holding her back. She told me that

her husband was not willing to leave Indianapolis, and I replied that it must be difficult to have the two loves of your life diametrically opposed to each other. Immediately she lowered her voice and said, “I’ve never told anyone this before, but I’m seriously considering leaving my husband and my son because I don’t want this dream to go unfulfilled.”

I asked for permission to share something I thought she might find helpful, and she granted it. I told Dianne that when I face major decisions, I like to play out the probabilities of where each decision might eventually lead. I asked her if she’d like to walk through this exercise, and she enthusiastically agreed. After five minutes, she came to the conclusion that choosing art over family, or family over art, were both less than desirable. She said, “I feel like this is a no-win situation. What do you think I should do?”

Before I tell you what I told her, let’s replay this scene, dissecting it as we go.

I boarded the plane consumed by my agenda. The Holy Spirit wrestled with me to let go and to be open to God’s agenda for the duration of the flight. I eventually gave in. This death to self is *always* a prerequisite for creating God Space. There are no shortcuts or substitutes for this! Now that God had his way in me, he could also have his way in my conversation with Dianne. Spirit-led listening and wondering create safe places for people to bring their real selves into the light. When they do, they usually reveal a specific need that requires a divine solution.

Let’s get back to the conversation. I responded to Dianne’s question with the following “spiritual appetizer” (more on this in Chapter 8). I said, “When life’s problems exceed my finite resources, I like to talk to someone with infinite resources. All I can tell you, Dianne, is that when I pray, ‘coincidences’ seem to happen.”

Dianne immediately consumed my spiritual snack. Instantly the lights came on as she recalled a time in her life when she talked to God regularly. She said, “Those were the happiest days of my life.” Dianne’s heart immediately opened up, so I asked her if she’d be interested in looking at what the Bible has to say about seeking God for direction. Again, she was eager to hear. We spent the remainder of the flight using the Bible as the focal point for our “divine dialogue” (Chapter 9 develops that idea).

Have you ever stopped to wonder why these stories always seem to happen on airplanes? Every Christian speaker and leader I know seems to have

an airplane story. I think it's because on an airplane, your spirituality has no bearing on where you sit or whom you sit next to. God uses this to bring Christians and non-Christians together as fellow sojourners heading in the same direction. Common ground, close proximity, no cell phones, and the belief that you will never again see the people you are sitting next to create greater possibilities for the natural and the supernatural to collide in meaningful ways.

SOMEONE ELSE'S AIRPLANE STORY

The following happened to a man I deeply respect because he creates God Space everywhere he goes. His name is Harvey, and here's his story—retold in my words, with my interjections—to highlight what he did to create God Space.

Harvey was on a flight to Zurich, Switzerland, and was seated next to a woman from India named Badhra. Early in the flight, he discovered that she was living and working in the U.S. as a doctor, and was traveling to Mumbai to visit family. As they continued to talk, Harvey asked Badhra if she was of the Hindu faith. She said, “No, I am a Jainist, which is similar.”

Harvey responded, “That's very interesting. I have not heard about Jainism. Would you mind telling me about your faith?” (*The conversation had reached this point because Harvey had taken a sincere interest in what mattered most to Badhra.*)

As she described Jainism, Harvey asked clarifying questions to better understand her faith. (*Harvey entered the conversation in humility, as a listener and a learner, seeking to understand before seeking to be understood.*)

Toward the end of their conversation, Harvey said, “I have found that most faiths have some hope attached to them to motivate people's involvement. Tell me: What does the Jainist hope in?” (*Harvey continued to explore her worldview by raising sincere questions that he was wondering about.*)

She paused and then answered, “There is no hope in Jainism.” (*Knowing he had about 10 hours with Badhra, Harvey chose to say nothing about Christianity. Yet, He wisely chose instead to prayerfully wait on the Lord. Badhra may have been expecting an agenda from Harvey, but as she continued to experience space to go at her own pace, she developed trust.*)

Shortly after this conversation, their meals came, and they casually chatted as they ate. Afterward, Harvey read for a while. Later, Badhra turned to him and asked, “Am I right in assuming that you are a Christian?”

Harvey replied, “Yes, I am.”

“Oh, I have always wanted to know what it means to be a Christian. Would you mind telling me?”

Harvey did not hesitate to share the gospel with her. He wisely emphasized the hope that Christians have because of Jesus’ claims. (*Harvey cued into the lack of hope Badhra described in Jainism.*) Badhra listened carefully, asked thoughtful questions, and thanked Harvey profusely when he’d finished.

Later on in the flight, Badhra began talking to the man on the other side of her, Akmed, who was from Iran. Suddenly she turned to Harvey and said, “I have just been talking to Akmed, and I think you would enjoy our conversation. Akmed is a Muslim, and I have told him that you are a Christian and I am a Jainist. He would like to hear more about Christianity—would you mind telling him what you told me?”

Harvey said he would be happy to, but suggested there might be a better way. “How about if I listen while you tell Akmed what you heard me say, and I’ll add or correct anything after you’ve finished? (*Harvey wisely asked Badhra to express what he had shared with her, so Badhra could internalize what she’d learned and deepen its impression upon her.*)

“Ah, very good,” Badhra said, and seemed delighted as she shared with Akmed. “How did I do?” she asked afterward. Harvey assured her that she had presented the gospel perfectly. This led to a stimulating spiritual conversation that lasted for several hours. (*Harvey intentionally created room by creating a safe place for these two people to do what we are all taught not to do: talk about religion. He didn’t make them go there; he created room for the possibility.*)

Though neither Badhra nor Akmed made a decision to become a Christian during the flight, Harvey was certain that they both now understood the gospel and the differences between Christianity and their own religions by the time they landed in Zurich. Now *that’s* an airplane story!

Here’s the million-dollar question: How do we *naturally* create room for spiritual conversations like that in our everyday lives? Surely God doesn’t intend for us to wait until our next ride on an airplane!

The following chapters are intended to answer this question by giving you one piece of the puzzle at a time. I hope that by the time you’ve finished this book, your confidence and competence will be stretched to the point that you’ll have your own stories to share.

So let’s begin with a broad working definition of God Space.

DEFINING GOD SPACE

God Space is where...

...God is felt and encountered in tangible ways that address the longings and cries of the heart.

...we come to the end of our own finite resources and experience the infinite resources of God.

...the natural gives way to the supernatural.

...seeds of faith are planted, watered, and nurtured.

...gentleness and respect are present, judgment is absent, and divine dialogue flows naturally because trust has been established.

...the invisible principles of God's kingdom are made visible in ways people can see, touch, and feel.

...friends of sinners—in other words, *our* friends—dwell.

...the topic of God can be explored freely without agendas, biases, and personal convictions getting in the way.

...cynics, skeptics, scoffers, and spiritually curious people alike can raise their questions, share their doubts, voice their concerns, and even vent their anger toward God and the church.

...the “unworthy” feel safe enough to bring their real selves out into the light, and to journey, one step at a time, toward the magnetic pull they sense deep in their souls.

...spiritual curiosity is aroused, and the message of Christianity becomes credible, relevant, plausible, and believable.

From **INFORMATION** to **TRANSFORMATION**

This book is meant to be experienced, not merely read. Therefore, each chapter concludes with practical assignments, so you can begin *having* those experiences. If you approach these ideas with a teachable heart, the definitions of God Space that you've just read will, more and more, become your reality.

Jesus was called many things during his short time here on earth. My favorite title for him is found in Matthew 11:19 and Luke 7:34 where Jesus acknowledges his awareness of the fact that many were calling him “a friend of sinners.” In my mind, no title gets at the heart of why Jesus came to earth more than this one. It so closely coincides with his mission stated in Luke 19:10: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

It therefore stands to reason that how we see and react to the people in our world who do not behave and believe like we do could be the truest indicator of how closely we are following the Jesus of the Bible. The following 10 questions are intended to help you reflect on what it actually looks like to be “a friend of sinners” in today’s world. Prayerfully ponder each question before jotting down a number from 1 to 10 that best depicts your honest heart-felt response. When you’ve finished, add your individual scores together to come up with your final total.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
NEVER				SOMETIMES					ALWAYS

1. Are you willing to overlook attitudes and lifestyles that offend you in order to befriend not-yet-Christians?
2. Are you free from judgmental thoughts when you are around people who do not believe or behave like you do?
3. Do you seek to understand not-yet-Christians before seeking to be understood by them?
4. Are you patient enough to wait for not-yet-Christians to ask you for your opinion before you offer it?
5. Do you love people who are far from God?
6. Do people who are far from God like you? For instance, are you invited to their social gatherings and into their conversations?
7. Does your body language communicate an openheartedness toward not-yet-Christians?
8. Are you able to offer unconditional love and acceptance (not endorsement) to people who offend your Christian sensibilities?
9. In your relationships with not-yet-Christians, do you respond with kindness more than “rightness”?
10. Do you have compassion and empathy for not-yet-Christians?

90 to 100: Congratulations! Don't be surprised if other Christians frequently misunderstand you. If Jesus was misunderstood for being a "friend of sinners," you will be, too! Continue to live for an audience of One, and some day you will hear "Well done, good and faithful servant."

70 to 89: You must decrease, Jesus must increase: one relationship at a time, one conversation at a time, and one heart attitude at a time. If most of your friends are Christians, it's time to step outside your Christian bubble. Join a new club, pursue a hobby, find common ground with those who are outside the faith but within your reach. Resolve today to be in closer proximity to people who are far from God. Don't be surprised if God uses "lost" people to save you from the attitudes in your heart that are not yet like his. *Please note:* Do not make this outward journey on your own. Jesus sent his disciples out in twos for a reason. Find an accountability partner!

Under 70: Jesus needs to do something in you before he can do something through you. Read *The Prodigal God* by Tim Keller to gain some fresh perspective. Read *God Space* for some practical, doable, and authentic ideas of how to practically be a "friend of sinners" in your day-to-day world. Begin each day with this prayer: *Lord Jesus, help me to see the people who will cross my path this day the way you do.* Then pay attention to the little nudges the Holy Spirit will give you as you walk through your day.

GOD SPACE

Revised Edition

Where spiritual conversations happen naturally

You've felt that tug...

A friend, co-worker, family member, or someone you just met is talking—and you sense God nudging you to say something. But what?

Welcome to *God Space*.

Where the Holy Spirit can do amazing things through everyday conversations. Where honesty and transparency allow for discovery and deep connection. Where lives are challenged and changed.

Connect with real-life stories of how ordinary people learned to engage others in rich spiritual conversations that open doors instead of slamming them shut.

God Space (Revised Edition) is...

- **Refreshed and updated.** This revised edition promises the same practical advice that **makes evangelism feel natural**. Plus, it's filled with even more of Doug Pollock's personal examples, stories, insights, and tips that Doug has gleaned over the past 15 years, and a brand-new final chapter.
- **Practical and engaging.** Filled with relevant stories and assignments that help you **naturally have spiritual conversations** with the people you encounter.
- **Empathetic.** Learn the importance of being not only willing but eager to listen to people and **earn the privilege** to talk about faith.

"The definitive book on outreach for this generation! *God Space* demonstrates how to turn our good deeds into good news with good conversations."

—Eric Swanson, Co-author of *The Externally Focused Church*



God Space has been helping people have natural conversations about God for 15 years with more than 100,000 copies sold worldwide!

1st edition cover



Doug Pollock is an author, speaker, YMCA chaplain, and affiliate of Athletes in Action whose focus is to help Christ-followers worldwide increase the quantity and quality of their spiritual conversations in practical, doable, and authentic ways. To find out more about Doug's worldwide ministry, visit his website at **GodGPS.com**.

Group

group.com | Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN 978-1-4707-7953-5 USD \$16.99
51699>



9 781470 779535

Religion/Christian Living/
Personal Growth



THIS IS A SAMPLE

The number of pages is limited.

Purchase the item for the complete version.

