

Links to Noticing Resources:

God Space: Where Spiritual Conversations Happen Naturally by Doug Pollock (LifeTree 2009)

Awareness Test on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ahg6qcgoay4>

Video called Get service - on getting 'Jesus Glasses'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfeXxkbgCVE>

Q Place is a web-based ministry that picks up and runs with the whole theme of Holy Conversation.

<http://www.qplace.com/>

Its reasonably-priced programme called The Arts of Spiritual Conversation is especially useful.

<http://www.qplace.com/howqplaceworks/trained-facilitator/the-arts-of-spiritual-conversations/>

You can get a free introductory module by providing your email address at

<http://www.qplace.com/shop/introducing-the-arts/>

My new perspective of understanding and loving God like never before gave me a new set of eyes through which to view people. With these new God goggles, I didn't just see people. I saw lost people. People with a name. People with a story. Good people. Good parents. Good neighbors. Yet they are lost people, and I barely even knew their names. (Melody Allred, in *Q Place, the Art of Noticing*)

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the godshaped life



Spiritual Practice Thirteen Noticing Our Way In *to Spiritual Conversations*

"Use your heads as you live and work among outsiders. Don't miss a trick. Make the most of every opportunity. Be gracious in your speech. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out." Colossians 4: 5—6

"Practice" means the repeated performance of a task or action regularly over time. A spiritual practice is exactly what the word suggests, a way to be deliberate about matters of the soul. But when we think of Spiritual Practices, we usually think of something inward, solitary, subjective. We don't realise that there are intensely practical virtues, like noticing the people in our lives, that also benefit from deliberate and attentive practice.

"A godshaped life is a flourishing tree" Prov 11: 28

Eastview Baptist Church 2014

Noticing

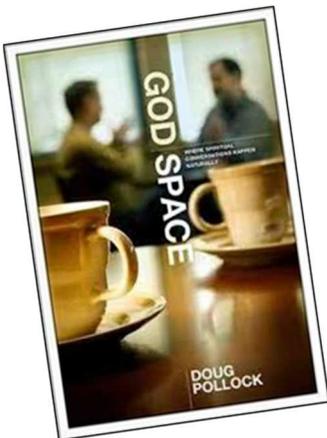
This booklet is based on a series of messages preached at Eastview in 2014.

Have you ever noticed how conversations with friends and family can naturally lead into talking about something deep? Going on a fast or having your head shaved for a mission or charity works that way, but so does worrying about your teens, losing a parent, or making a big decision like changing jobs. Same goes for the profound conversations a university friend has found herself having with other students about her thesis topic, steadfast love in the Old Testament. The other postgraduates know little about the Hebrew religion, but they know something about love. And they don't mind talking about it.

Some writers call this "holy conversations" – conversations that touch on spirituality, though not necessarily faith or religion. Conversations that don't aim towards a specific outcome, but meander around the deep stuff in ways that draw out values and dreams. I believe that when we talk about this stuff, God is in the midst.

Centuries ago the apostle Paul wrote this advice to his Christian friends: *Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.* (Colossians 8: 9 – 6) NRSV).

He also wrote of God "opening doors". Ravi Zacharias says we must learn to find the back door to people's hearts because the front door is so heavily guarded. It's that easier door we focussed on in our recent series of sermons revolving around sharing our faith, something most of us are not that good at. We noted how *we are reluctant, nervous about being talking to strangers, or being put on the spot, and we need to find ways to do it more naturally and easily*". In other words we are paid-up members of Cowards for Jesus!



In recent years we've been thinking about mission in our backyard, about the conviction that our bighearted God is already at work in the lives of our neighbours and workmates, and that he is calling us to participate in his mission. We came across **God Space** by Doug Pollock, who wants to help us "build deeper relationships and talk about the things that matter most", Pollock's book is aimed at helping Cowards for Jesus engage in conversation in natural and winsome ways.

Noticing your Way In is Pollock's first suggestion. ministry of noticing. Jesus noticed people. People like

Zacchaeus and Levi. Sick people, needy people, lonely people. and when he saw them, his heart overflowed with compassion. Matthew tells us when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd...and he asked the disciples to pray for more workers to help (Matthew 9: 36). Paul was a noticer too - he used a statue he saw in Athens as the starting point for a spiritual conversation: "I notice that you are very religious in every way, for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars..." (Acts 17: 16 - 34). So we are in good company if we learn to pay attention to what going on around us.

If you've seen the Awareness Test on YouTube, you'll know its easy to miss something Most of us fail the test, because we weren't paying attention to that other thing. When we do notice, it like having a special pair of glasses. Jesus glasses. The ability to see beyond appearances into the inner world.

Paul likens this to having the mind of Christ; "we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2: 16) He also describes the eyes of our hearts being opened, so that from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view (2 Cor 5: 16).



"Noticing" says Doug Pollock "is a prerequisite to caring about others, and serving them in tangible ways that smuggle the gospel into their hearts." (GodSpace p38) He tells a number of stories about the ministry of noticing and how it can lead to caring and serving; noticing is "a relational act of kindness". Sometimes it's not appropriate to make a personal connection - but Pollock says that "godspace" is also created when we pray. In my experience, when you pray specifically for people, new opportunities seem to open up. Because people matter to God.

The art of noticing is unintimidating. It doesn't require any memorising or presenting. It doesn't even require courage. But if you start doing it, you'll find it changes your heart.

Try to notice something about three people who cross your path today. How does your new perspective change your response? How might you pray for these people and situations?