

God Space

Creating an Environment for Spiritual Conversations

Why do we have to create an environment?

Ravi Zacharias says, "*We must learn to find the back door to people's hearts because the front door is heavily guarded*". Many people we hope to reach for Jesus react defensively. They anticipate and are amply prepared for any direct attack on the holy places and sacred shrines of their hearts.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (*he has placed eternity in men's hearts*) reminds us that God has given us ALL an inner drive to know and be known by Him. We just receive the joy and responsibility of helping to draw that out in others.

We do this by creating a **safe space** for an exchange of **wondering questions** that lead to spiritual conversations.

How do I create an environment for conversation?

- 1) The best spiritual conversations happen in a place where the other person feels comfortable. Be attentive to location, who is around you, lighting, etc.
- 2) Be genuine, and truly interested in what others think and feel! (*most people naturally reciprocate with equal curiosity and openness toward us*)
- 3) Remember, not yet Christians aren't the enemy- they're the victims of the enemy.
- 4) Be persistent in relationship. Over time, even skeptics and cynics take note of something they know is not of this world.
- 5) Don't feel like you have to force God into the picture. (*He is always somewhere in the background*) All good wondering questions eventually lead to God!
- 6) What we **cherish** most, we **notice** most. (*we need to be living our lives with an eye towards how to draw others closer to God*)

Now I'm in conversation... what do I do?

- 1) Galatians 5:25 says to keep in step with the Spirit. Don't drop an entire theology lesson on someone who asked one spiritual question! In fact, in most of our conversations, **questions** are more important than **answers**. (*Why? Because people aren't ready for the answers we would like to share with them.*)
- 2) Prepare spiritual appetizers beforehand: 2 minute stories intended to stimulate spiritual thirst, keep dialogue flowing, and demonstrate the relevance of Christ in our lives.
 - a. Before you offer the snack, always **ask permission**, keep it short, and relate it to the topic at hand.
- 3) Know, a timely Scripture can connect more to a heart than a lifetime of sermons. (*maybe memorize a few so that you have them at hand*)

- 4) Don't attempt to "win" a conversation. (*Winning a conversation may mean losing opportunities for future interactions with that person*)
 - a. 2 Timothy 2:23-25 says not to have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments.
- 5) Don't be parental during conversations. Approach as an equal who desires to learn about the other person, and then share about your self.
- 6) Don't use Christianese. (*Learn to translate spiritual truth into everyday vernacular*)
- 7) Don't feel like you have to **force God into the picture**. (*all good wondering questions eventually lead to God!*) (*Raise the kinds of questions that help them see the inconsistencies in their worldviews*)

(When do you bring out the gospel? When the head and the heart are bowed toward God in humility that comes from brokenness.)

What about if you are trying to rebuild a fractured relationship?

- 1) If a bridge is broken: its unrealistic to think that it is going to be rebuilt from the other side. Make the effort!
- 2) How to approach hostility or a fractured relationship:
 - 1) Take the position of humility
 - 2) Abandon your weapons
 - 3) Interact with joy
- 3) Take courage! Failure is rarely final or fatal, but simply an opportunity to begin again more intelligently.

What are some good "wondering" questions? (*it helps to have considered your own answer before you ask!*)

- 1) What is the greatest piece of wisdom someone has ever passed on to you?
- 2) What is the most important lesson you've learned in life so far?
- 3) Have you ever had anyone approach you and try to talk to you about God? What feelings did you have afterward?
- 4) Why do you think there are so many religions? Do you think it's possible for them all to be equally right?
- 5) Have you ever been able to get a handle on what you think your purpose is in life?
- 6) Do you believe there is a solution to social problems such as murder, famine, rape, racism, divorce, etc?
- 7) Have you ever had an experience where you felt the presence of evil? The presence of God?
- 8) What causes you to struggle the most with the idea of God's existence?
- 9) Why do you think so many couples end up "falling out of love"? Is this true love?
- 10) What would you want God to do to validate his existence and bring you to belief?
- 11) As people get to know you, in what area do you feel most misunderstood?
- 12) If you could ask God three questions, what would you ask?