

I will not be continuing this autobiographical thread (thread within a thread) for much longer (you may be glad to know), but I do want to get to the ultimate point (for the thread outside the thread), which is why by a couple of quirks/flukes I ended up better equipped to write books for general audiences than most of my colleagues in my PhD program. The first has to do with what happened with me back in my days at Moody when I was learning tons about what was actually in the Bible (and the fundamentalist way of interpreting it all) (which, at the time, of course, I thought was the *only* correct way to interpret it).

At Moody, every semester we were required to engage in some kind of formal ministry (“Practical Christian Experience”). Everyone at Moody had to do one semester of “door-to-door evangelism,” where we were taken to one neighborhood or another somewhere in a suburb of Chicago, and literally knocked on doors to talk to people to try to convert them. This was the Moody version of the Mormons. So I did that one semester (with no success, I might add). Apart from that one requirement, we had lots of options.

And so I did different things each of my first four semesters there. One semester I went to Cook County Hospital once a week to assist in the chaplain’s office, visiting some very sick people with “the good news.” I suppose they especially needed it, though I was fairly clueless about how to actually be of any use to them.

One semester I was a radio counselor...

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