

Becoming A Contagious Christian Session 1

You know what, one of the most awesome things that I have found is that God calls us – ordinary Christians – to be contagious with our faith. We’re called to spread it to as many people as possible. He wants to use us, every single one of us to lead others into a relationship with Him that will last throughout their lives and into eternity.

To start us off I want to watch a quick video clip. There is a lot of spiritual confusion out there in our society. The world needs a bunch of contagious men and women to stand up and be contagious. In this clip a random bunch of people were asked one of the most basic questions: “Who is Jesus.”

Watch dvd clip: Who is Jesus?

What is your reaction to that?

It’s a sobering thought that so many people around us who we pass every day are really unclear about even the most basic issues. Who Jesus is, what God is like, and how we can know we’ll end up in heaven one day.

So that’s why we’re here. To learn how to help bring spiritual help and clarity to them so they can find God’s forgiveness and a new life in Christ.

So we’re looking at this topic this month, well actually this is what church is all about so we should be growing in this area every day, is To prepare us to be contagious Christians who are active in leading others to Christ.

Luke 19:10 *For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost.*

John 20:21 *As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you.*

This is what Jesus was all about and this is what He wants us to be about.

Acts 1:8 *You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

Jesus makes it very clear that our mission must start like His, reaching the people closest to us – those in our own Jerusalem. Missionaries are still very important, I know so coming from a Missionary family. But He says we must start with those nearest us and then expand from there.

When we help people find the forgiveness and leadership of Jesus, what are the benefits?

To us?

To others?

To God?

Discuss

It’s a win-win situation when we are Contagious. We win, God wins and others win.

But there’s some things that hold us back when we try to communicate our faith. Perhaps the greatest barrier is the fear that we have to become something that we’re not.

So let’s do some honest reflection. What comes to mind when you hear the words “evangelism” or “evangelist?”

Discuss

No wonder some of us get scared when we hear the word evangelism.

But we want to try to get past some of the negative stereotypes of evangelism. You don't have to be pushy or insensitive in order to be used by God. So let's get rid of the negatives.

But what about what really stops a lot of us from being contagious. It's our positive stereotypes. These often hold us back because we feel that we can never live up to those standards. Isn't it great to know that we don't have to live up to that entire list. So let's put a cross through the positive side as well. Not because these elements are bad – but to illustrate the fact that we don't have to try to be superstar Christians that God didn't make us to be.

The fact is we don't have to become something negative that we don't want to be.

Nor do we have to be something great that we were never made to be.

Rather we need to be ourselves. God knew what He was doing when He made you. He gave you your personality on purpose and He wants you to use it to spiritually impact those around you in ways that fit you.

We need to get to the point that when we hear the word “evangelism,” we just think of ourselves and the people we're befriending and talking to about God.

So if it's not about becoming something negative that we don't want to be or something great that we can't be, then what is it?

Let's look at 6 Components of Contagious Christianity that helps us paint a new mental picture.

Christianity is fueled by Love.

People share their faith for a lot of reasons, including guilt – feeling they need to do more for God, or fear that another Christian might be disappointed with them if they don't tell others about God.

But the Bible makes it very clear that the basis of any evangelism must be fueled by love and concern for others. Paul said, *“For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all.”* **2 Corinthians 5:14.**

What motivates us then is a genuine love. Our desire shouldn't be to manipulate or force them to do something – but simply to help them find what we've found in Christ.

Peter adds in **1 Peter 3:15** that we as loving Christians, must answer people with ‘gentleness and respect.’ We must handle them with kindness and humility that comes from knowing that we not smarter or better – we're just blessed to have already found God's forgiveness and leadership.

It flows out of Authenticity.

Our friends need to see a real difference in us. We don't have to be perfect but we must be genuinely seeking to follow and honour God in our daily lives. Jesus said in **John 15:5** *Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will produce much fruit.*

Joe Aldrich puts it this way: “Christians are to be good news before they share the good news.” When our walk with God is real, it naturally overflows into the lives of others. We should let this fact motivate us.

Another aspect of authenticity is that we must find a way to approach communicating our faith that suits our God-given personality. When we act naturally it puts others at ease and helps open them to our message.

It's built on Relationships.

Friends listen to friends. When we have problems we naturally turn to those we know and trust. So if we want to help people, we first must develop real and trusting friendships with them.

It's important though that these friendships be "no strings attached," meaning we'll still love them and care for them whether or not they agree with our understanding with God. Don't just be friends to make them Christian and then dump them if they don't.

You must take an interest in their background, stories, questions, doubts, and concerns. Find out what they like and dislike, believe and don't believe, value and don't value. Deepen the trust and respect of your relationship. This all makes it possible to encourage them spiritually as well.

It's expressed in both *Actions and Words*.

Francis of Assisi once said, "Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary use words." Our daily actions need to exhibit God's love. The saying goes, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

1 John 3:18 tells us *"Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth."*

But the Bible asks, *"And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tell Him?"* **Romans 10:14**

The Bible tells us that words are necessary. We must do more than just show the Gospel. We need to explain it verbally. We must do more than hope that our friends notice our lives and figure it all out on their own.

It's a *Process*.

We shouldn't rush a person in his or her spiritual journey. It usually takes time for people to understand that Gospel, trust it, and act on it. Rarely do they hear it for the first time and commit their lives to it straight away. We must patiently try to bring them along, step by step. We see this process when Paul says, *"My job was to plant the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God, not we, who made it grow."* **1 Cor 3:6**

We can't underestimate the importance of relationships. Ongoing friendships providing natural opportunities to encourage others in their Spiritual journeys. This is also the best context to help them finally find and trust in Jesus.

It's always a *Partnership*.

Contagious Christianity works with us, others and God. God rarely uses just one person to bring someone through the entire process. He often orchestrates a number of people, influences, and experiences to move a person towards Him.

Notice the teamwork in **1 Cor 3:5** *"Who is Apollos, and who is Paul, that we should be the cause of such quarrels? Why, we're only servants. Through us God caused you to believe. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us."*

Cliffe Knechtle explains it this way, *"A person's coming to Christ is like a chain with many links... There are many influences and conversations that precede a person's decision to convert to Christ. I know the joy of being the first link at times, a middle link usually, and occasionally the last link. God has not called me to only be the last link."*

It's so encouraging to know that we can be a link in the chain of influences that God uses to reach people. He doesn't often ask us to carry the full burden but He asks us to do our part. To watch for opportunities to partner with others to "link up" our strengths with theirs in order to lead people to God.

Always remember that God is our most important partner and that reaching others was His idea. He is the master evangelist. Unless His Spirit empowers us in our reaching out, nothing will happen. That's why we must pray consistently, asking God to do His work and to use us as He draws our friends toward faith in Jesus.

Have quick break

One of the most important and liberating themes of the NT is that God intentionally built diversity into the church. He didn't make us all the same! **1 Cor 12:18** tells us that "*God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be.*"

He gave us different spiritual gifts, personalities, temperaments, and different styles of evangelism. Even the followers of Jesus in the Bible didn't communicate their faith in the same way. There are a variety of approaches and each of them are vitally important and relevant for us today.

So let's have a look at the different styles and where we all fit in.

Turn to survey, explain and complete

Fill out survey with 1-5

5 – Totally me

4 – Pretty much like me

3 – Somewhat like me

2 – Little like me

1 – Not me at all

Don't analyze questions for a long time. Simply ask the question and put down your quick response to each one.

Then transfer those numbers to the grid at the bottom.

Have a look at which style scored the highest – that's your primary style. Then look at your Secondary style. Some of you may have a combination of 2 or more styles that come out high. That's fine too. That means that you'll have natural options you can choose from depending on the need.

You might find as you try those natural styles out one will emerge over time as your most natural. It may even be that you have style #7 which hasn't been thought of yet. The key is that now you should have at least one natural style that you can use to reach out to others.

Now let's have a look through the different styles. As we study them listen and confirm which style or styles sound most like you. Also think of other people you know who might fit that style. They might be great outreach partners for you!

Direct Style

Peter in Acts 2

It's the Day of Pentecost and Peter did a bold thing. He stood up in front of thousands of people in Jerusalem – the very city where Jesus had been crucified just a few weeks earlier. He spoke very directly to them and didn't soften the message at all. He gave it to them straight, telling them that they had killed the Messiah and were in big trouble with God.

It's important to note that what Peter did that day wasn't foreign to his personality. He was a straightforward kind of guy. When he wanted something, he went for it. In order to get close to Jesus one time he jumped out of a boat and swam to shore. Another time he walked on water. And another time he even cut off a man's ear with a sword to prevent the guy from interfering with his plans. The Direct Style fitted Peter, because he had a direct and forceful personality. This was exactly what God needed for the situation in Acts 2 and the Holy Spirit powerfully used Peter's challenge to the crowd to repent and be baptized bringing over 3,000 to Jesus that day.

Some of you may be pretty similar to that description. You may not talk to large groups like Peter did, and maybe you haven't gotten involved much yet in trying to reach people for Christ, but in relationships, conversations, and business interactions you have a direct, get-to-the-point kind of an approach.

If you develop your direct-style personality into a Direct Style of evangelism by preparing yourself and let God use you to challenge people spiritually, the Holy Spirit will use you in powerful ways just like He did Peter.

There are people who won't trust in Him until one of you challenges them to take action. So let God use you!

Quickly go over The Direct Style Handout

Intellectual Style

Paul in Acts 17

Paul was talking to a group of philosophers in Athens, Greece. These people were very different to those in Jerusalem and probably wouldn't have responded well to Peter's Direct Style.

That's why God sent Paul who used the Intellectual Style. He began by talking about the Athenians' idol to an "unknown god," and then built it into a logical case to present the resurrected Christ. He even quote their own philosophers to make his point. God used Paul's intellectual approach and a number of those thinkers accepted Christ.

Again notice here that what Paul did fit Paul. Throughout his early life and his many letters to the early church, of which a number make up the NT, Paul was a natural at presenting the gospel in a reasoned and logical way.

People with this style enjoy working with questions and ideas, and love debating with other people and viewpoints. Questions they ask are ones like, "What do you think?" and "Why do you believe that?" and "How do you know that your viewpoint is right?"

Maybe some of you are like Paul and like to think through and argue your point of view.

In a secular world where more and more people don't understand or believe the truths of the Bible, we need this style more than ever.

The Gospel doesn't just need to be declared but it also need to be defined and defended. If you prepare yourself you'll be able, as Paul puts it, to "demolish arguments" and "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Quickly go over The Intellectual Style Handout

Testimonial Style

Blind Man in John 9

This man had been blind from birth. He used to sit by the side of the road and beg for food.

That is, until that day when Jesus passed by and healed him. For the first time in his life he could see. But before he could blink he found himself being questioned by the religious leaders who opposed Jesus. He didn't know all the answers but what he did know he told them clearly. In essence he said to them, "Look, I used to be blind, but now I can see – deal with it."

It's pretty hard to argue with someone's experience.

People with this style don't just want to talk about their own experiences; they also want to relate their spiritual journey to the life of their listener. They learn how to do this by getting to know the other person, and in effect hearing that person's story before sharing their own.

Every follower of Jesus has a story to tell. But some of us, like that blind man, are especially made for using our story to communicate to others. Jesus has made a difference in your life, even if it's not as dramatic as that of the blind man, but you've still got a compelling story to tell.

I want to challenge you if this is your style, develop your story and then tell it as often as you can. It's a powerful testimony to the fact that God is alive and that following Jesus is the best way to live.

Quickly go over The Testimonial Style Handout

Interpersonal Style

Matthew in Luke 5:29

The former tax collector, Matthew had only recently come to faith when he realized that his tax-collecting coworkers needed to know Jesus. So he threw banquet in his home and invited the guys from the tax office as well as Jesus and the other disciples. This was no ordinary party however. It was a party with a purpose, or a “Matthew Party.” It was his way of deepening his relationships and influence with these friends he’d worked with for so long and also a way to let them get to know Jesus and the disciples.

We can all be inspired by this because we all need to build relationships with those we reach. In fact, even though all of the styles can be used in various ways and in a variety of settings, generally speaking they are all most effective when used within the context of relationship. Those with this style specialize in this area. They tend to go deeper with people, and are able to utilize the trust they develop to influence them for Christ.

You may be outspoken or more quiet, but you’re a people person who loves being with friends. Friends listen to friends. As you build relationships, God can use you in powerful ways. Don’t underestimate what might happen during a meal or when you invite people into your home or small group.

Quickly go over The Interpersonal Style Handout

Invitational Style

Samaritan Woman in John 4

Jesus broke all the social customs of his day to talk to this woman who was drawing water from the well. Simply because she mattered to the Father. He had a conversation with her first. He built a connection before anything else. He then steered it towards spiritual matters and revealed that He was not just a prophet of God, but the Messiah Himself. The woman immediately ran back to her town and told her friends and invited them to come with her back to the well to hear what Jesus had to say. They accepted her invitational and as a result of her invitation, some of them became followers of Jesus.

Like her, some of us especially are good at getting people interested in whatever we’re involved in. You can fill your car with friends whenever you go out to places. If you apply this to evangelism then you can have a great impact for God.

According to George Barna, “A recent national survey we conducted among unchurched adults indicated that 25% would attend a church if a friend ever took the time or made the effort to invite them. That’s one in 4 adults.

Imagine the impact if those people were asked. If we took the time to invite our friends who are waiting for us to reach out to them and invite them along.

This is something we all can do. Invite a friend or family member along to a church service, small group, concert, movie or event. It’s a low threat approach that God can really use. Offer to pick them up, and maybe even have a meal with them.

Quickly go over The Invitational Style Handout

Serving Style

Tabitha in Acts 9

Tabitha (or Dorcas) was a woman who served others by doing good and helping the poor. One of the ways she did this was by making clothes for the widows in her town. And her efforts were apparently making an impact. When she died, God sent Peter to go and pray over her, raise her from the dead and put her back into service. So as you can see, there are benefits to having this style.

Some people care for others in such an effective way that those being served can’t help but look upwards and realize there must be a God to motivate such self-sacrificing love. Those with the Serving Style are not serving people instead of sharing Christ with them. Rather, they share

Jesus first and foremost through their serving and their selfless acts of kindness open up numerous opportunities to speak about God as well.

Don't underestimate the spiritual influence it can have. Loving acts of service are hard to argue with, and when combined with a clear articulation of the message of Jesus, the impact can be powerful. It is your style that will, over time, reach many of the most hurt and hardened people. So keep serving and don't lose your confidence. It will make a spiritual difference especially over the long haul.

Quickly go over The Serving Style

Go over Impact List & Prayer List

So in concluding this session here's 3 important thoughts

1. God knew what He was doing when He made you!

Your personality was given to you on purpose. He wants to use you in natural ways to reach others.

2. God knew what He was doing when He put you in your circle of non-Christian friends.

Your friends relate best to people like you – that's why they're your friends. That means you're the best-suited and best-positioned person in the world to influence them for Jesus.

3. God knew what He was doing when He put you in your church.

I'm confident that most of the people and resources you need to reach your friend are right here in our group. And as we work together, with God's guidance and help, we're going to reach a lot more people for Him.

I hope you feel encouraged. I know that I most certainly do! It's such a relief to know that we can be ourselves while being used by God to reach others. We don't have to force ourselves to fit in a certain mold that just doesn't fit us and where we would, in fact, be less effective if we tried. Instead we can partner with others and work together with out natural styles and God's help, to reach the people He's placed in our lives.

I'm confident that God is prompting us to take action that He's going to bless and use us. Let's trust Him, step out, and watch Him work in the lives of friends and family members that we love – almost as much as God.

Discuss the different styles that are need in our church (depending on time).

- *A team that visits newcomers that needs volunteers with the Direct Style?*
- *A group that answers spiritual questions that needs people with the Intellectual Style?*
- *A ministry that collects testimonies and uses them in your services, bulletins, or on your web page, and could use some stories from those with the Testimonial Style?*
- *A small group or hospitality ministry that could use members with the Interpersonal style?*
- *Outreach events that could be maxamised by those with the Invitational Style?*
- *Opportunities to show God's love and expand your church's outreach by organizing the efforts of those with the Serving Style?*