

Contagious Christianity
Contagious Faith
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We are starting a series on Contagious Christianity. How to share your faith so at the end of this 5 week period we're going to have you go to every door in your neighborhood, sprinkle holy water on the door and speak Hebrew. We're going to ask you to use phrases like I walked the aisle, I shook the preachers hand, and I was baptized in the blood of Jesus. The blood of the lamb covers me. All of those comments we use so commonly in church world that do not translate into the real world. I mean honestly if I'm a lost person and you ask me if I want to be covered by the blood of the lamb, no thanks, that doesn't sound sanitary; I'm going to pass on that. We all understand the theology because a lot of us grew up in church and so when I saw I walked down front and shook the preacher's hand, what does that mean? Well you know it means you had a personal commitment to Jesus. But it really sounds like there is something magical in that preachers hand doesn't it? If I go down front and shake his hand, whew, halleluiah I'm saved! No, but we use those words over and over and over and over and so at the end of this time, what we want to teach you to do is to share your faith in everyday language with your style of personality. You know we used to take people and we ran them through these classes and we taught them a set program and a set pattern and you walked up to the doors of strangers which I really never thought that was a great idea, knock on the door and you ask them several questions and you get down to the point that if you died tonight do you know...we don't even know these people and we're asking them spiritual deep questions and so we have seen and discovered that the way people come to know Jesus is not by somebody cold knocking on their door but someone whose invested their life in them telling them about what they've found. Using your personality; using your humor; using who you are to share with someone something wonderful that you have found. Now to get everything you need out of this you need to join one of our life groups because I'm going to be preaching about it each Sunday morning but then our LIFE groups each Sunday night will be studying it for six weeks or whatever night that LIFE group meets. If you're not in a LIFE group you desperately need to be in one. Tonight at six o'clock our new Connections Pastor will help you to put you into a group of people like you which for some of you might be hard to find. But we can do it. Those of you already in a LIFE group, tonight you do not want to miss because it's an important night in the series, you need to be involved in this series to find out what it means to be contagious.

Today I'm going to talk about why be contagious. Why should we share the gospel of Christ? Why should we share what we've found? I believe the first motivator to sharing the gospel is this; I call it stockpile factor. God has done a lot in your lives. Some of you have been through some unbelievable hard things and God has been there for you. Some of you have struggled, some of you have suffered, some of you have had pain beyond our imagination and God has been there for you. Most of us in the room, there was a time that we bowed our knee to Jesus and we said Father, forgive us for our sins and at that point we became new creations. We became new people. The old was gone and that old person just disappears and God covers him and many people need to hear that message and we need to learn how to give that message. God has done so much in our lives, how do we not share? God has been so good to us, how do we not share? Stockpile factor; we see it in 2 Kings. I've talked about this not long ago so I'm just going to give you a synopsis of the story. It's a perfect story of the Old Testament about the gospel in the New Testament. What we have is Samaria is being besieged by the king of Syria. In this day in time they had these big walls around the city to protect them and this army would come against them but they wouldn't march up against the walls because if they marched up against the walls there was going to be a lot of casualties. People would throw stuff at them from the wall, boiling water or fire. It was not a good tactic to just run up to the walls and just attack. So what these armies would do is they would surround the city with their army and cut off all supplies. In other words you couldn't leave the city wall to go to your gardens, you couldn't leave the city walls to get your livestock, and you couldn't leave to get water. You were stuck and what they did is they starved you out until you gave up, died or were too weak to resist. So that was their plan. There were times that this army would encamp around cities for a year to three years before they actually marched into the city and took it over. Apparently they'd been around Samaria for quite awhile and it's says in the bible that the people in Samaria started having a famine and they were so hungry and I want to read that verse to you because you think I'm making it up, they besieged until a donkey's head was sold for 80 shekels of silver and a ¼ of a pint of dove's dung for 5 shekels of silver. So they were putting out serious money to sit down to a meal of donkey brains and bird crap. I mean honestly, that's what was going on, they were starving to death and they were using all their money to eat things that we wouldn't even think about touching. Well now the story goes on, there are two lepers on the outside of the wall. These two lepers are dependent on the people on the inside of the city to feed them. They've been cut off because of their disease. They've been cut off from everything and everybody and so they had to be on the outside of the city hoping that someone would hand them food or at least going through the garbage to find food and there was nothing there. They got to the point that they looked at each other and said you know what there's no point going in the city, they're starving to death. Why don't we go into the enemy camp because they might kill us but we're going to die anyway; maybe they will feed us. That's how desperate these two men were to eat. They were going to walk right into the

enemy camp and the bible says that they started to walk into the camp and what they did not know is that the night before as the Syrians were getting ready to turn in God sent them into confusion. God sent them into bedlam. In fact they thought other armies were coming to attack them. They all rose up against each other; they fought each other and 180 thousand of them fled. They left everything behind; they left all their provisions, all of their material wealth, they left everything and ran off. So as these two lepers are coming in they were fearful right? They're looking around and all they see is smoldering fires, they don't see any men. So they walk up to the first tent and I don't think you can knock on a tent so they kind of opened it up and they looked inside and here was this food so of course they went right into that tent and they began eating their fill and they looked around and all the silver and gold and all these treasures were there. So they loaded them up and carried them to a safe place and they hid them and they went into another tent and it was the same way, it was full of food and it had all of this material wealth and their hoarding it up and all of a sudden one of them looks at the other one and says this isn't right, the people in the city are starving to death and we just hit the lottery. The people in the city are eating brains of donkeys and we're out here eating all this food, it's a crime for us not to tell them so they go into the city. Now can you imagine them going into the city, lepers. Can you imagine what the people did when they first saw them? Of course they ran from them, stay away from me. It's a contagious disease. Leave me alone! But you don't understand, there's food. Leave me alone, get away from me! Finally they talked somebody into going out and people started going out and started seeing that they could all they wanted to eat and all these material possessions and then the entire city came out and it says the entire city was saved because these two men risked going into the city and telling about the treasure they found. Now, I don't have to draw the parallels do I? Here we are trapped in sin; here we are struggling with sin; here we are facing life without the savior, without a God. We're in need of something; we've messed up our life and made horrible choices. We know when we look at ourselves in the mirror we are not what we are supposed to be and then someone comes and says hey, I'm as messed up as you but guess what I found? I found a savior who will take all your sins and cover them. I found a savior that will walk with you each step of the way. I found a savior that will love you unconditionally. I found a savior and I want you to find him too. God has done so much in our life that it's a crime for us to hold it in and keep it there; to not step out of our comfort zone and not tell somebody about the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

What keeps us from telling? What are we afraid of? You see, those lepers focused on the abundance of the provision and it led them to go back and announce to the people listen if you found something wonderful you need to announce it to the people and as you do that I want you to see what God does because the second motivation in developing this contagious faith is the honor of being used by God. I mean we're used by God. The creator of the world doesn't need us but he chooses to use us. In fact it says in Act 1:8 you will receive power from

the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. He said this is what I've decided to do, I've decided to send the power of the holy spirit on each one of you that call me your own and you're going to go out from here and you're going to share the good news and I'm going to use you. I know you're thinking, use me? God you've got to find a better tool than that. God, you don't want to use me, I'm not worthy, and I don't know enough about the bible. God I'm not a good Christian. God I've made mistakes. We have all these excuses and God just shakes his head and says it's doesn't matter, I want to use you. In fact, it says he has works for you to do that only you're to do. He has people in this world that are going to respond to you; there are people in this world that are waiting for your personality. They're waiting for your sense of humor; they're waiting for the pain that you've already been through and they're going to listen to the good news because you tell them. You've got to believe that. You've got to know that. God uses us to touch other people and there is someone out there you know waiting for a witness and it doesn't do me any good to talk to them, it doesn't do any good for your neighbor to talk to them. They are waiting for you to speak into their life. I have a great story that I have told some of you before; when I was very young I was a youth minister at Tabernacle and in the church I was as busy as I could be. I was full time youth minister, I was a full time student, I had two kids and one on the way and every time I would sit in staff meeting the pastor at that time would say have you met Mike French? No, I haven't. You've got to meet him. He's your age, he's got kids you just really need to meet this guy and I'm thinking to myself because I'm not disrespectful to my pastor, I don't have time to meet this guy. I've got too much to do. I've got a family, I've got school work, I've got a job, thanks, I'll get to that. Well little did I know at the same time Mike's dad who was a member of that church was talking to Mike saying hey, have you met our new youth minister? He's got kids about your age, you really need to meet him, I think you'd all be friends and Mike is thinking the same thing, I've got two kids, I have two jobs and I'm going to school, I don't have time to meet that idiot down at the church. So for Mike, when he pictured youth minister, he didn't tell his dad but that was probably the last person he wanted to hang out with. Well, the pastor and George French were pretty sneaky. They sent them on a ski trip that I was leading and so as we were going on this ski trip, Dawn got to know them and Dawn picks my friends for me by the way. She doesn't pick my clothes so I can't blame her for that but she does pick my friends so we came back from the ski trip and Dawn said they're going to be our friends. I'm like, great, wonderful. We got to know each other, we hung out, our families really intermingled, our families got along wonderfully and God began to do things in his life and my life. We had bible studies, we started our first small group, we hung out and we became really great friends and I called him this week and I told him I was going to tell this story and I said tell me how did God use me in your life to be involved in church and to get you active so your family was in church like they are today? He said, well, you were so messed up and God was using you anyway, that I figured if God could use somebody as messed

up as you then he could use me. Isn't that edifying? It's not my personality, it's not my humor, it's not my great looks, it's simply you were such a screw up but I loved God. See, he had been raised that if you're going to be used by God you have to be perfect. You have to have all your stuff together. You see he believed in the persona of what it meant to be a Christian. The fakeness, the unrealness, the we've got it all together and I'm the last person in the world to be able to do that. I want you to know that it's a great thing that God used me in his life. It's a honor and a privilege and I'm telling you there are people who come up to me through youth camp and children's camp and things and say you preached that sermon and I asked Jesus into my heart and that's the greatest thing in the world. What an honor to be used by God. God wants to use you today because there is a world dying and there is a world that is going to experience an eternal hell and the third motivation is the reality of hell. There is a living, burning hell. There is a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth and I know in 2009 you're thinking oh that's old to scare kids. No, it's real. Jesus talked about it all the time. Jesus talked about a living burning hell more than he talked about anything else. He said there is a hell out there and people are going to it. That's why Jesus when he was here on earth wept over the rich, young ruler who'd rather be rich than righteous. That's why he wept over the city of Jerusalem as he looked and they had all this religious activity but no relationship with God. He knew that they were going to spend an eternity separated in a burning hell where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. There is a hell out there and I don't try to be paranoid about it but when I look in faces I can't help but think if they don't hear the word they're going to go to hell. This last week Patrick Swayze passed away. Patrick Swayze was the guy that my wife always threw in my face. You guys have one of those? Yeah, you have one of those. She watched Dirty Dancing and it's like, why can't you be? Why can't you be? Because I'm not a fairy that's why I can't dance. Anyway, it's not that I was insecure about her crush on him but he passed away and she was watching something on T.V. and I walked through. It was touching. It was talking about what a good life he had and how much he loved his family and all of these things and I had seen interviews with him throughout the years and I realized one thing. He did not know Jesus. She's watching this and I walked in and said it's really sad to know that he opened his eyes after that illness and found himself in hell. That's sad. It's horrible. She said how can you say that, how can you judge? Hey, the bible says there's one way to Jesus, one way to God and that's through Jesus and if you have not chosen that path, you go into destruction. That's not me judging, that's me laying out the facts of the word of God. Well, maybe he...we can't live by maybe he or if someone accidently accepted Christ. We've got to tell people about the reality of hell and lead them. I know some of you are thinking well it's none of my business, my faith is private well that's a lie straight from the pit of hell. Your faith is anything but private. If you have a private faith today, and if you believe your faith is just between you and God, I guarantee you are heading the wrong direction ladies and gentlemen and you need to hear today because your faith is very public and if it's not it's not

faith. So we've got to tell people; we've got to warn people. It's there and it's a reality. You don't worry about whether they think you're crazy, you don't worry that you'll be ostracized or seen as a religious nut; you've got to care about people enough to open your mouth and share the gospel. I had a church member send me this video that we're about to watch. It comes from a guy that has a show on HBO. I don't approve of the show but he's a known atheist. Everybody knows he's an atheist and this is what he said about somebody telling him about God.

"I want to talk to you about this. I get home from the show and at the end of the show I mentioned before we'd go out and talk to folks and sign an occasional autograph and shake hands and so on and there was one guy waiting over to the side what I call the hover position after it was all done, big guy, probably about my age, big guy, and he had been the guy who picks the joke during our psychic comedian section of the show. He had the props from that in his hands because we give those away, the joke book and the envelope and the paper. If you haven't seen the live show it's not worth explaining but he had props from the night before that we had given him. He wasn't the guy that night and he walked over to me and said I was here last night at the show and I saw the show and I liked it and he was very complimentary and bought my use of language and complimentary about honesty and stuff. He said nice stuff, no reason to go into it, he said nice stuff and then he said I brought this for you and he handed me a Gideon Pocket edition I thought he said from the New Testament, Psalms is from the New Testament right? Part of the New Testament a little book about this big, he said I wrote in the front of it and I wanted you to have this, kind of proselytizing and then he said I'm a business man I'm sane, I'm not crazy but he looked me right in the eye, did all of this and it was really wonderful. I really believe he knew that I was an atheist but he was not offensive and he looked me right in the eyes and he was truly complimentary. It didn't seem like empty flattery, he was really kind and nice and sane and looked me in the eyes and then gave me this bible. I've always said that I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and hell and people could be going to heaven or not getting eternal life or whatever and you think that it's not really worth telling this because it would make it socially awkward, and atheists think that people shouldn't proselytize just leave me alone, keep your religion to yourself, how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? If I believe that beyond a shadow of a doubt that a truck was going to hit you and you didn't believe it, if that truck was bearing down on you, there's a certain point where I tackle you and this is more important than that. I always thought that and I've written about that, I've thought it conceptually. This guy was a really good guy. He was polite and honest and sane and he cared enough about me to proselytize and give me a bible which had written in it a little note to me, not very personal but just I liked your show and so on and then like 5 phone numbers for him and an email address if I wanted to get in touch. Now, I

know there's no God and one polite person living his life right doesn't change that but I'll tell you, he was a very, very, very good man and that's real important and with that kind of goodness, it's okay to have that deep of a disagreement. I still think that religion does a lot of bad stuff but man that was a good man who gave me that book. That's all I wanted to say."

I want to point out something there in case you missed it, this atheist said, how much must you hate someone not to tell them about God. How much must you hate someone? The reality of hell, this is a real place that people go that reject Jesus Christ, how much must you hate them not to tell them about eternal life? Just because it would be socially awkward, just because maybe the people at work would look at you funny or whisper behind your back or maybe because a neighbor wouldn't invite you over anymore because you spread your religious view or maybe a family member. I remember a lady asking me to speak to her husband about heaven and hell and so I went in and I began to talk to him and he had a lot of questions. I began to share with him about Jesus. At the end I asked him would you like to ask Jesus into your heart. He said you know what, not right now, I'm not ready. I said fair enough, that's fine, but I do want to throw out a warning, the bible says that life is like a vapor, we're here one minute and we're gone and so I just want you to know that you might not have another opportunity and I wouldn't be doing what God called me to do if I didn't warn you that there's a time that you may not feel this feeling again. When I left she called and she goes, what are you trying to do? You're going to drive him away! I thought to myself, really? I'm I going to drive him away to hell number two? I mean is there another place to go? I want you to see that God wants to use you and the reality of hell should spring us into action especially with the people we love and care about. Never less the people that walk the streets, we should care enough to open our mouths. Well I don't know what to say, yeah you do. Use your personality. Just talk about what happened in your life. You don't have to argue the bible, you don't have to know where Cain and Abel got their wives, I've been preaching twenty years, I don't know. It's okay not to have all the answers, but it's not okay not to tell. Share with people.

The fourth motivator is the wonderful joy of God using you to change somebody's life for eternity because you decided to open your mouth people's life changed for eternity. Not only there life, people around them. We have a church member that I want you to hear his story. A man who was brave enough to tell him in his adult life that Jesus was the answer to his problems. I want you to see it from his own words, watch this video.

"I'm Larry Burks. I'm a member of The Avenue Church in Waxahachie. I've been a member about twenty years. I'm Katy Warsing and his daughter. Brother David asked me to come in and share my salvation experience about who led me to Christ and about my opportunity to lead others to Christ. Jeff Swain is a man who worked at the same company I worked for a little over twenty years ago and I was having a tough time in my life and Jeff knew

that and he would stop me as I was going by his work station every so often and talk to me about the issues in my life. He told me about his relationship with Christ. He was a fairly new Christian and so he wasn't educated in the bible particularly, he wasn't a theologian but he knew enough about it to tell me what I needed to do to know Christ. He continually told about God's grace and mercy and I didn't understand any of that but I did know that Jeff cared about me and I knew what he was telling me was the truth about what the bible said about the need for salvation and how to be saved. It had a tremendous impact. You know when somebody first comes to know Christ, that's maybe when we're on fire the most for the Lord so I was telling others about Christ. It had an impact on my dad as well. He was already saved but I think it helped him be in a right relationship with Christ. It changed my values and my behavior and gave me a heart for other people. I realized that other people needed that opportunity like I did because if they didn't hear, they didn't accept Christ, they would go to hell when they died. I've had the opportunity to talk to a number of people about Christ and lead a few to Christ and I recognize that I'm just one player in the lives of those who are witnessed to, the Holy Spirit is the important person of the God head and there are other people who have an impact on people in witnessing but to be there when somebody gives their life to Christ is so neat and of course with Katy I was able to raise her in a godly home. I was saved when she was three and I could take her to church and Sunday school and VBS and read her bible stories and as she had questions as she grew up I was able to relate them to what God would have her to do. It's been a beautiful blessing to see her come to know Christ and to impact other people's lives for Christ as well. I can see on a daily basis how if Dad wasn't the man that he is because of Christ there is no way I could have come out the way that I did and be able to raise my children the way that I am and just be a witness for Christ. It's given me a opportunity to have a completely different life."

Can you see in that video just the ripple effect, one person had the nerve to talk about God to somebody you work with and there are many people in this room that has been touched by Larry Burks. Many people have been touched by his daughter. They would have been completely different people without that one person standing up having the courage to open their mouth and he didn't know anything about it, he just learned it himself but he had a love for Jesus and a love for others to tell them about him. I hope you're all in; I hope you're ready. I hope you're ready for the next five weeks. I hope you plug into a LIFE group because you need both the sermon and the study to do what God needs you to do and I want you to know, we're going to teach you how to be contagious in your faith, we're going to teach you how to share your faith with your style, your way. We're not going to ask you, like I said, to march around your neighborhood 7 times and blow a trumpet, we're going to show you what God wants in your life. (That's a Jericho joke for some of you new folks) God's going to show you how he wants to use you for his glory and for his honor. In five weeks I'm going to preach a sermon called God's Contagious Love, in that sermon I will give all the tenants of salvation and

have a push for people to accept Jesus as their savior and follow him in baptism. On that day, October 25th, I want you to bring somebody with you. Maybe you're not ready to share your own testimony but you are ready to invite somebody to church. Invite them to church, offer to buy their lunch, pick them up, whatever you have to do but get them here that day if you care enough about them that you want their eternity secured bring them that Sunday. You can bring them every Sunday, but that Sunday in particular, bring them into this place.