

Contagious Christianity
Contagious Relationships
October 5, 2009
Pastor David Brown

<VIDEO> Hey you, yeah you...you're going to hell. Hey buddy I might see you at church later today. No? Well then enjoy hell I guess. I get up every morning pretty early and come up here and share the good news from my rooftop. Hey baldy, no baldy locks Jesus loves you babe! I think the rooftop is a perfect place to win souls for Christ. When you're up here it's easy to look down on people and see all their shameful ways and to yell at them to change those ways and they listen because I'm a voice from above and they respect that. Guys, have you heard of Jesus Christ? He is your personal Lord and Savior. Have you asked him into your heart? I have a Bible up here; I'll throw one at you. I haven't saved anyone or led anyone to Christ personally but I'm pretty sure that I've saved thousands. Excuse me sir, put those cigarettes down, those are bad for you. You're body is a temple that Christ gave you as a gift in order for you to live this life and find out that salvation is here for you if you'll just accept him into your heart. Go down there? Why would I go down there? It's filthy down there. It's full of sinners. My place is up here. I belong up here doing God's work. Would you like me to pray over you? Where are going? Come back here. Alright, good luck in hell. <END VIDEO>

There we are, contagious Christianity; that's what we're looking for right there. Those of you who are new we have started a series on contagious Christianity, sharing your faith, being contagious in it and I want you to know those of you that are church people that's how the lost world sees us now actually shouting from the rooftop but shouting from our ivory tower looking down on people and telling them that they're all going to hell and we have the answer and we're great. I love when he said you want me to go down there with all those sinners? I don't think so. Today we want to look at that and we want to see how God would have us as Christian people, those of you that are in this room today that have surrendered your life to Jesus how he wants you to rub shoulders with irreligious people. Rub shoulders with people in the world. Rub shoulders with what you would consider lost people that's what God wants. The problem for churches in the last generations is we've walled ourselves in and we have separated ourselves from the world and we have cut ourselves off in what one writer calls Holy Huddles. We just huddle up with a bunch of saved people. We get in the room and we huddle together and we talk about how much we love Jesus, we talk about how much Jesus loves us and how good it is to be a Christian and then we never get out there and run a play. We just like to huddle. We like to gather together in our circle. Now it is important to have Christian friends and we talk about that all the time. You need to be doing life with other Christians because they hold you accountable and they not only hold you accountable, they

help you grow and mature. But what happens is we start cutting ourselves off from all of the people out there. We stopped engaging our world. We seclude ourselves; we become a commune; we become a cliche; we become a sect and we never get out into the world and rub shoulders with them so they know who Jesus is. So today we want to talk about how the church is called not just to huddle together and enjoy the company of each other but how we're to take the word of God and we're to be right involved with the people where they are everyday of life. The great story of the Bible found in Luke chapter 5. Jesus and he's walking, he looks up and sees a man named Levi who later becomes Matthew. He's one of the disciples. Levi is a tax collector and how many of you in here like tax collectors even today? Anyone gets a letter from the IRS except a refund and gets excited? Oh boy, I'm being audited! I'm so happy! No, we don't like tax collectors today and tax collectors today are a lot different than they used to be. In fact the only people we can compare tax collectors to is a young man that I know that grew up with my oldest son. He was in and out of our house all the time. We saw him grow up, we met with him and talked with him; he called me pops a lot and he called Dawn mom and anytime he saw us he really wanted to be around us and he would call us when he was in trouble. He got into some trouble and he called me and I had lunch with him and as he was talking he said that when he got out of school he had a baby and wanted to go to work and try to provide for himself and his child. He said that he got a job at Home Depot making \$7 an hour and he was working 40 hours a week and he couldn't hang out with his friends and he couldn't do the things that he wanted to do. He would bring home about \$250 every week and said it wasn't enough to do anything. He said he couldn't get out of his mom's house or couldn't provide for his child. He had to ride a bike back and forth to work. It was miserable. His parents his entire life had made their living by selling drugs. One Friday night he decided to sell marijuana and ecstasy out of his home. In two hours he made two thousand dollars and so he said I can work at Home Depot forty hours a week, miss being with my friends, drive a bicycle and not have nice things or I can sell drugs and I can have everything I want. Now I know you're looking at that saying oh that's horrible. He made a decision to spend his life doing something that we think is horrid, and it is, so he could have nice things. That's what the tax collectors did. The tax collectors were equal to that. They made their living off the misery of others because what Rome would do is they would hire a tax collector, but they paid him nothing. This was the game. The tax collector was in charge of taking so much money from each person but now they could tack on to it anything they wanted. In other words if they were going to get money from you, they could tack on ten percent, forty percent, a hundred percent. Anything they wanted they could tack to your bill so they would send it to you and if you looked at it and thought I'm not paying this, the Roman army showed up at your house to beat it out of you. So these tax collectors were not men that anybody liked. They hated these men, they despised these men. These men were making a living off of other people's misery. While people were starving and struggling they were living in the big houses, they were throwing the big parties, they had all

the bling, they had everything and this is the man that Jesus specifically went to and said, follow me. Now apparently God had been working in Levi's life because he didn't ask Jesus any questions, he didn't ask where they were going. It says he simply left everything and followed Jesus. Now, all the disciples left something but Matthew left everything. He left the big house. He left the fine things. He left the expensive parties. He left everything to follow Jesus and as the story goes, it says he does something really incredible once he joins up with this group of disciples along with Jesus. When he joins up with what we would call the church he looks back and he says, man I want to throw a big party. I want to pay for everything. I want it to be a blow out, knock out party and I want to invite all my old friends. Now, who do you think tax collectors hung out with? Tax collectors; nobody wanted to hang out with them. Hang out with tax collectors and people who liked to be around people with money. So this group of friends that he had, when you look at them they were the low life, they were the horrible people. They were the people that church people don't associate with. But he says I'm going to throw a big party and Jesus looked and said you know what...I understand they're your friends but that's not a good idea because you see I'm holy and I don't need to be around...is that what Jesus said? No, Jesus is at the party. Here's the cool thing about Jesus...lost people liked him. Lost people loved him. Lost people wanted to be around him. Lost people wanted to ask him questions. The people who had trouble with Jesus were the religious people. Lost people didn't mind being around him at all. So here's this big party and it's going and I mean things are going on that I'm sure that God doesn't approve of in this party and Jesus is in the middle of them and the religious people called the Pharisees. They looked at the disciples and said what are you doing? If you're respectable, if you were a good Christian you would know that those people are low lives, you would know that those people are sinners. You would understand that and you wouldn't be anywhere around them. See, Matthew had a heart. He had a wonderful heart for lost people because listen, that's kind of dangerous isn't it? Think about it for a minute...he's bringing all his lost friends to meet his new church friends. That's some kind of party. Matthew took a risk bringing these people together but he cared enough for these lost people to say, I have found something, I'm going to live life at a deeper level and I want you to hear the good news. He wasn't afraid of what people think. He wasn't afraid of what Jesus would think of his friends. He just invited them all together and said here we are. It is an incredible thing to see. If you've gone through Walk Across The Room with Bill Hybels, he calls them Matthew Parties and he encourages his church and people to have Matthew Parties and this is what a Matthew Party is, it's when there are more lost people present than saved people. Because this is what we like to do in our holy huddles, you know we hear a sermon on evangelism, six weeks on Contagious Christianity and so we get about twenty of our church friends together and we invite that one lost person. Now, you're a lost person for a minute, for a lot of you it's not a stretch, just listen, you're a lost person and you say hey were going to have a party at my house. We're going to have some water and some graham crackers and

you're invited and we're going to have a bible study and it's going to be incredible and our preacher might come by and he's going to tell you about Jesus and would you come? No, I think I'm going to have an ear infection that day. I'm really not looking forward to that party. But that's how we do it because we're comfortable in that situation. We've got to outnumber the lost people but a Matthew Party is geared a little differently. A Matthew Party is you get five or six couples that are lost and I mean really lost and you bring one or two Christians into the mix and those one or two Christians come into that place and they just hang out. They tell jokes, they laugh, and they connect with these people. They get to know these people who need Jesus. Now, if you're that saved person and you're there with a beer in your hand, drunk, lying on the floor, it's probably not going to be very effective. That doesn't work. You've got to be there, but you can't be one of them. Do you understand that? Jesus was there, there was no sin going on in Jesus' life, the people around him were sinning but not him. He was there because he loved people and he had compassion for people. Let me tell you, you get more lost people in a room than saved people, they'll talk about religion, and they'll talk about spiritual things because they outnumber you. But you get them in a room where they're highly outnumbered, they're going to shut down. They don't want to come. They don't want to be around that so this is what Matthew is doing. The religious leaders are going out of their minds; they cannot believe that Jesus would be around these people. You see in their heart, these people were greedy, profane, immoral, worthless sinners and no God fearing person had any business rubbing shoulders with the likes of them. They're wicked, they're lost causes and they're worthy of going to hell. Folks, I just described to you the church of today. That's the church. We look at the lost and we say good luck in hell. That's what the lost people see; they don't see a heart like Matthew. They see this cold heart. Jesus answers the Pharisee's and he says is it really the healthy that need a doctor? We've got some doctors in our church. Do you think you'd make a very good living if all you were around were healthy people? Can you imagine opening up a healthy clinic? If you're healthy come see the doctor. If you don't need any medicine come see the doctor? If nothing's going wrong in your life physically, come see me. Do you think you'd stay in business long? No, doctors like sick people. Sick people pay the bills for doctors. That's why Jesus said listen; I came to be with the unrighteous. I came to be with the sinners, I came to be because they know they need help. They know they need me. They know they need salvation. Now, he's not looking at the Pharisees saying you get a free pass because he knows they're lost as they can me too but they have this self righteousness. They don't know they're sick. They're walking around with cancer and they don't know it. Jesus says it's hard to get through to them but I can go to these people who know that they're sick and they listen. Let me tell you something, I've never had to convince a lost person that they had sin in their life. They know it, they feel it. God puts a big vacuum, a big hole in their heart. They know something's missing. God made us this way; to long for something and the world is trying to throw alcohol, drugs, sex and money in this hole and it doesn't work. Here

the church is standing above them on the rooftop, good luck with that, you're going to hell when the church should be down there in the middle of them working in their lives, touching their lives and speaking into their lives. Let me tell you something, most people won't listen to you until you earn the right to speak to them. Today, if I'm standing here and one of my friends comes up to me and says I like that red and white shirt but you're really gaining some weight you might want to check that. If it's a friend of mine I'm going to say you're right and it's killing me. If you don't know me, don't come up and tell me that. That's not going to go well. If I don't know you and you come tell me man, you're fat! I'm probably going to say, yeah you're ugly. I can lose weight and look good, what are you going to do? You are in trouble. But, that's what we do. We go to people that we have no business, we have no relationship with, they don't even know we care about them and we look at them and say, you're going to go to hell. You know what; I don't receive that from somebody I don't respect. I don't receive that from somebody that I don't know loves me and cares for me and wants what's best for me. At that point, boy you need to speak into their life. There are some people in this room today and you don't speak into other people's life because you think faith is a private affair. You think faith is just between you and God. Let me tell you something, if that's what you believe, you probably don't need to speak to anybody because you're not saved either. You need to keep that kind of Christianity to yourself because that isn't real. But if you know that Jesus saved you and changed your life; if you know that there is a burning hell that people are going to experience; if you know that you may be the only Jesus that somebody ever sees; if you know that you're the only bible that somebody has and you're not willing to pour your life into them and you're not willing to tell them the good news of Jesus Christ, wow, whose heart do you have? Matthew's heart full of compassion or has your heart grown cold like the Pharisee's? We have to be careful church. We have to learn a lesson. The lesson for us today is it is easy to fall into perfect traps. Attempting to grow in the Christian faith it is easy to start gauging our spiritual maturity by how much we know, how much we serve, how many church events we go to, how many sermon CD's we listen to. It's easy to start gauging our life on what we do and there is nothing wrong with those things, those things are good, they're all good things but we have to be careful that we don't get wrapped up in the doing in the Christian life that we neglect the loving side, the side that reaches out, the side that wants to see people accept Jesus. We need to get comfortable around some lost people and today if you don't know any lost people you need to start changing where you do life. You need to get around some lost people. Lost people shouldn't scare you. I've never been afraid of lost people. I like lost people. They're so honest. They're so real. Lost people are a lot more fun than you guys. They just tell you what they think. I remember my first day at this little bitty Christian college, East Texas Baptist University, I'm standing in line registering and this girl turns around to me and says, you're wild aren't you? Well I probably should have put the beer and cigarette down; no I don't know why she said it. No I'm a ministerial student, I'm not wild. She said oh you're wild. I'm like no, I'm

really not. And this chick really was, she wasn't Baptist wild she was buck wild. She was flat out wild, but you know what? I wasn't afraid of being around her and being her friend. I wasn't afraid of hanging out with her, in fact I married her. No, I'm just kidding!!!! It's not the same person. Only a joke; only trying to make you laugh! I wasn't afraid to be around her. I didn't care that she wasn't living for God at that time, that wasn't my job. My job was to be her friend and to speak into her life and there were some times that she came to me because she felt like I was the only person that wouldn't judge her. You know what? Her sin wasn't the fact that she smoked marijuana on the weekend and got drunk. Her sin was that she didn't know Jesus Christ as her personal savior and that was it. Now, I want to be real clear because some people have started to misunderstand the grace we preach. If you don't know Jesus, your only sin is rejecting him but once you've accepted Jesus, some things got to change. It's okay not to be okay when you get here, but you can't stay that way because you can't go back into the world and rub shoulders with lost people unless you've changed. So listen if you're a recovering alcoholic and you got two days sober, I'm not asking you to go into a bar and witness. That's not smart. But when you get six months to a year sober or you get two to three years sober, when you get healthy and mature in Christ you need to be back with those friends and be a witness to them because you can talk to them in a way I never will. Don't be afraid of lost people. It's not about what we know. People don't care about what you know until they know you care. As a church we've got to open up the doors, but that's not enough. We've got to get outside those doors as a people and we've got to rub shoulders with a lost world. I take people on mission trips all the time and it amazes me that they will talk boldly about Jesus on the mission field but not say anything about him when they come home. So today I want to give you some tips of what I would like you to do to rub shoulders with some lost people.

The first thing I would like you to do is I want you to be a contagious consumer. Where you buy gasoline, where you go to restaurants, dry cleaners, grocery stores, other places you do the necessities of life, you need to go into those places with a purpose. You need to go into those places and strike up conversations and start building relationships. Now don't walk up to them when they're a stranger and say do you know you're going to hell...do you want to come to church. That doesn't work. Build relationships, go to the same restaurant and talk to the same waitress or waiter every time. Talk to them; begin to invest in their life. Begin to find out who they are and listen, if you're a Christian and you're going to a place on Sunday to eat, will you please tip and tip a lot. Do you know what they tell me? They tell me nobody wants to work on Sunday. Do you know why? Because you people are the meanest, pickiest people of anybody else. They hate to wait on Christian people. Something's wrong with that folks and Christian people they say don't tip. You've got to be kidding me. Speak into their life. Speak to the same waitress every time and tip them big, even if the service is bad, Cory. Tip them big. Invest in their lives. The grocery store, can I help you out with your bags, yes you can. Talk with

them. In everyday of your life, in the mundane things in your life it can be a spiritual adventure if you'll open your eyes.

How about this...how about where you exercise do you think that could be a place you could minister? How about recreation, the softball fields, the baseball fields, the soccer fields? Some of the greatest times were talking to families that we had on baseball teams. Great open opportunity to talk to them about God after they got to know me. I'm probably going to have to change where I work out because nobody works out there. I don't know how they stay open. It's kind of nice but if you're going to be strategic you're going to need to be around the same people when you exercise and you need to begin to invest in their lives. There's a guy in our church that I've known for years and years. I met him at the YMCA working out at an ungodly time in the morning. We just talked and talked. I don't even know if he knew what I did for years but I invited him to church occasionally. About ten years later we had a big neighborhood impact day and I stood up in the pulpit and I looked right over there and he was sitting there and I was shocked. He's been in church almost every Sunday since. They're a great family in our church. You know what? If I would have walked up to him the first day with his Catholic background and told him he needed Jesus and won't you come to my church this Sunday you lost sinner, first of all he would have beat me to death because he's a big man and second of all he wouldn't be here today. Be strategic in your exercise, in your recreation.

Also, get involved in the community, get involved in your school, and get involved politically. I don't know why Christian people have pulled themselves out of all that, it's important for us to be there. We need to have a voice in our school system; we need to have a voice in our city. Christian people need to stand up and talk to other people about God in public and it's okay to be part of that. Now, if you home school or private school that's between you and God but I've never been afraid of the public schools. I don't mind my kids rubbing elbows with other people who are lost. I don't mind my kids going to school with the new Muslims that are everywhere. I don't mind my kids going to school with atheists, that's fine, I like that. Get involved, don't pull out of everything and surround yourself with just Christians. I was coming home last night, a lot of you already know this, there's a publication I just cannot stand and they advertised it last night on KLTU. I don't know why I was listening to KLTU, I think I had a brain hemorrhage or something but I was listening to it and they started advertising the Shepherd's Guide. Come get your new Shepherd's Guide. All Christian companies, all Christian owned because heaven forbid having a lost man come and clean your toilet out. I mean that's not a job for lost people, you want to only have saved people in your home. That's amazing to me! Why in the world would we not use everything in our life to rub shoulders with lost people and tell them about Jesus?

How about your work place? I hear people moan all the time; oh my workplace is so horrible. Oh my workplace...it's just so horrible what I have to put up with and listen to. I just work with a bunch of lost people. I understand; I do too. I always hear people, it must be so nice because at our office all we do is open the bible and pray all day long. Angels come down and sing in the morning, it's an incredible place. You know, in your workplace instead of complaining, why don't you be strategic? Why don't you pray and go into your workplace and look for just one person that you can speak life into? One person who you have something in common with and maybe you can have lunch with, maybe you can begin talking to them about God. How exciting would it be if they accepted Christ and then you went after somebody else? Contagious Christianity.

How about people in your neighborhood or in your extended family? There are people that need to know Jesus. Today I want you to be reminded of this spiritual rookie, this tax collector one day out, one day saved. He had compassion for the lost and wanted to reach them or the religious person who had been in church all his life and just grew cold. Let me tell you if you stop being around lost people, you grow cold. You just keep doing the work and you grow cold, you're heart grows cold. If you're in a LIFE Group you need to really be there this week. It's an important week for you. If you're a visitor, I just want you to understand how important it is to us to share this good news of Jesus Christ to the people in our community. That's one of our core values is evangelism...sharing Jesus with irreligious people. In our church we're not trying to get all the Baptist in town to come here, in fact they wouldn't like it. I had a guy Monday morning, told me three times that he gives to the church and wanted me to wear something different in the pulpit. So I asked him how much he gave, no I didn't. We're not after saved people in our church. If they come and want to be part of something incredible, they're welcome. But our heart is I believe is the same heart Jesus had, he came for the lost, for the unrighteous. It's time for the church to open up the doors and go out and bring them in.