

## *Contagious Christianity*

Welcome back to Walking with Purpose! I don't know about you, but whenever I hear the word "contagious", I shudder and head for the closest door. Something is catching, and I don't want it! Just being *around* germs will impact *my life*, and infect *my* body.

Do you realize that God wants you to have the same effect on those around you? God wants to use *you*, wherever He has placed you, to impact those you come in contact with...for *Him!* We don't want them heading for the closest door when you walk in (*chuckle*)...but after they've been with you, your Christianity should have rubbed off. You are contagious!

Whether or not he knew it, Pete was making a difference. Pete was a drunk who had come to faith in Jesus Christ through a mission. Prior to his conversion, he had earned the reputation of being a "hopeless case", and no one expected more than for him to live the rest of his pathetic life in the slums. Yet once he met Christ...everything changed! Pete became the most caring person that anyone associated with the mission had ever seen. He spent his days and nights just "hanging out" at the mission, doing whatever needed to be done. There was never anything that he refused to do! No task was too menial, whether it meant cleaning up the vomit left by a violently sick alcoholic or scrubbing toilets after careless men left the restroom filthy. He always had a smile on his face and seemed grateful just to help. You could count on Pete to feed feeble men who wandered off the streets into the mission, and he'd then tuck them into bed if they couldn't do it themselves.

One evening, when the director was sharing the Gospel with the usual crowd of angry and despondent men, there was one man who looked up, came down the aisle to the altar, and knelt to pray. He cried out for God to help him change. This repentant drunk kept shouting, "Oh God! Make me like Pete! Make me like Pete! Make me like Pete!" The director of the mission leaned over and said to the man, "Son, I think it would be better to pray, 'Make me like Jesus.'" The man looked up at the director with a confused look on his face as he asked, "*Is he like Pete?*"



## *Fellowship*

1. Discuss part 2 of your testimony: how did God bring you to the point when you accepted His gift of forgiveness?



## *Discipleship*

A Quaker scholar, Elton Trueblood, once compared evangelism to fire. “Evangelism occurs when Christians are *so ignited by their contact with Christ* that they, in turn, set other fires. It is easy to determine when something is aflame. It ignites other material. Any fire that does not spread will eventually go out. A church without evangelism is a contradiction in terms, just as fire that does not burn is a contradiction.” I would add to his comments that a **Christian** who is not aflame...who is not “contagious”...is also a contradiction. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ means we are following Him and becoming more and more like Him. And **He was contagious!** Not everyone agreed with Him nor liked Him, and being a Christian sure doesn’t assure us of popularity with everyone. But He impacted His world, people knew He was different, and He changed those around Him!

Turn with me to Matthew chapter 5, verses 13 through 16 as we read it together. “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

Oh, how I love the fact that when we are who God has made to be and walk in our purpose...we **will** have an impact on our world! We **will** be contagious! I love potatoes; I love oatmeal; I love steak! Yet all of these foods are quite bland if they are not salted! In fact, I’d rather not eat them if I can’t have salt! It seems like such an insignificant ingredient, yet it makes all the difference in how much I enjoy those foods. Now what does that have to do with you and me? These verses say that we are the salt of the earth! Our work may seem insignificant to us, yet we are having a bigger impact than we realize.

I have a friend whose father is a very humble man, yet has always been eager to do what God made him good at, with the time he had available to him. Right now, during his retirement, he’s involved in duplicating DVDs of church services to send to those stationed in Iraq. Week after week, he spends hours doing his job...one that not many people even know he does, sending the DVDs overseas to people he has never met. Recently the pastor, for whom he works, received this letter:

*Hello Pastor Ben. I have met you via DVD through a member of your church that I am deployed in Iraq with. Her name is Alison. She has been very gracious to share the DVD's that you all send her. I cannot even begin to express what a blessing it is to have such a wonderful opportunity. Being here is truly miserable, but to have met Christian friends AND to have their church send DVD's of the services is a testimony that God loves us and always provides for our needs. Thank you so much for helping us continue our spiritual growth here!*

*Alison is truly an answer to prayer for me. I know for a fact that without her, my walk with Christ would have certainly faltered. Please lift her up in your prayers for the wonderful witness she has been and that she continue to look to God for strength to endure the remainder of this deployment. I look forward to the opportunity of becoming a regular member of this body of believers when we return home. Until then, please keep the DVD's coming.*

What an example of salt! You see, salt does its work when it does what it's created to do! Who is playing the role of salt in this letter? Three people, actually...**all** doing what God created them to do! The pastor, who faithfully preaches the Word. My friend's father, the DVD duplicator! And Allison...called by God to serve her country, yet having an impact on those around her day by day. I hope that this is encouraging to you, brothers and sisters! No matter what your personality or area of expertise, God wants to use you!

We are also compared to a "light". Not only **cannot** a light be hidden, but it is made to shine! As we said earlier, a true disciple of Christ who is *not contagious* and shining is a contradiction.

An army chaplain was visiting wounded soldiers in the hospital. He offered to read some Bible passages to one young soldier. But the soldier said, "I'm cold," so the chaplain wrapped his own coat around the young man. Next, the soldier asked for something to drink. The chaplain propped up the soldier's head and held his own water canteen to the young man's lips. Then the chaplain asked again if he could read some passages to the young man. This time, the soldier replied, "If there is anything in that Bible that caused you to do what you've done for me, yes. Please read to me **that part** of the Bible."

That's lifestyle evangelism! It's living a life **consistent** with our faith that earns us a right to be heard.

A study recently asked people to use single words to describe Jesus. They responded, "Wise, accepting, compassionate, gracious, and humble." Then he asked them to use single words to describe **Christians**. They said, "Critical, exclusive, self-righteous, narrow and repressive." Let's go over that list again: "Critical, exclusive, self-righteous, narrow and repressive." Ouch!

In Jim Wallis' testimony, he says: "When I was a university student, I was *unsuccessfully evangelized* by almost every Christian group on campus. My basic response to their preaching was, 'How *can* I believe when I look at the way the church lives?'"

It's been said, "People will not care how much you know...until they know how much you care." Even the Mormon Church has discovered this! They took a survey and discovered that they converted only *one family* by knocking on 1,000 doors! But they *also* discovered that the conversion rate of *friendships* -- just bringing friends into member's homes -- was 50%. They convert 50% of their friends! Now don't get me wrong: I don't agree with Mormon theology! But let's learn from their survey and make friends with people, using our influence to bring them to the Savior!

What about you? Who can you salt? Who needs your light? If you're like me, you want your life to count for a whole lot more than more zeros on a pay check! Let's make it our goal to infect and affect our world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ!



## *Ministry*

2. Read I Peter 2:12. Do you think Christians are held to a higher standard among those outside the church?

What is going to have the most impact on those watching your life?

3. Discuss this quote by Howard Hendricks: "In the midst of a generation screaming for answers, Christians are stuttering."

4. Read I Peter 3:1, 2. How can Paul's advice to wives apply to all believers?

5. Read I Corinthians 16:9; II Corinthians 2:12; and Colossians 4:3.

What do all 3 passages have in common?



## *Evangelism*

6. Your testimony will be complete with your story of the *difference* Christ has made in your life. Put all 3 parts together (Before Christ, salvation experience, and difference) and practice sharing it at least once this week!



## **Worship**

7. Talk about the “doors” God has opened up to you these last few weeks. To whom have you been “contagious”?
8. Close in prayer as you praise Him for what He’s done and will continue to do!