

“A Contagious Faith”

II Kings 6:24-7:20

Today we are embarking on a six week journey through a series called “Becoming Contagious Christian.” Today we will be looking at a contagious faith. We are doing the same topic in Sunday school, with a Sunday off for Mother’s Day. For those who can’t make it to Sunday school I will be having the course on two Sunday afternoons following the morning service. They will be about three hours long. The first will be April 21 and the second will be May 5. Let me know if you will be attending the two days. I’ll need to make sure I get books, which are \$8.

I want to say one word about the course – evangelism. I’m not sure what that means to you or what thoughts come to mind when you hear that word. Without pretending to know your thoughts, I can make an educated guess as to what many of you might be thinking.

Some of you are delighted. You have wanted something like this for a long time, maybe for years. You are eager to improve your personal evangelism skills and to learn some new approaches. Let me just say before we go any further that there is no one right method to sharing your faith. I know some of you went through Dr. Kennedy’s Evangelism Explosion program years ago. Others may like the lifestyle evangelism approach. Can I say that this program in a way combines them both. Some of you are perhaps excited about this study.

Others of you are rather neutral on this subject. You really don’t know what to expect or what it’s all about, so there is both a natural curiosity flavored with a dose of skepticism at the same time. You would like to learn how to more naturally share your faith, but you’re afraid that one Sunday I’m going to cancel church and tell you to meet at Meijer’s and tell you to witness to 10 people. Rest assured that isn’t the case. We’re going to Wal-

Mart instead. So I hope that for those of you who may be neutral that you are open to what the Word of God teaches and you’ve decided to approach this series with a teachable spirit and willing heart, but as the saying goes, “the jury is still out” on the matter.

Others of you may be dreading it. You look at the “E” word like going to the dentist for a tooth extraction or setting a compound fracture. You would almost rather have the pain than share your faith. Evangelism strikes fear in your heart. Hear the word and you are immediately terrified. Hands shake and the forehead breaks out in a cold sweat. The mind goes numb and the heart pounds. There may be a mixture of fear and pressure along with a little guilt because you know you should witness but just don’t know where to begin.

Maybe you figure that evangelism should be left to the experts like the Pastor or Billy Graham or those with the spiritual gift of evangelism (which you secretly sigh in relief that you don’t have) or maybe you’re thankful for groups like the Gideon’s.

I want to assure you from the beginning, especially those who may be a little fearful, that the desire is not to increase your burden or guilt or fuel any pressure that you may already feel. I’m with you on this. I am confident though, if we are open to the work of the God’s Spirit and His Word this will be a time to grow and learn how to become more effective in this area, in spite of what previous experiences you may have had. I am trusting and praying that God will guide each one of us into becoming a contagious Christian.

The messages will be in sync with what we will be doing in Sunday school, but will not be a repeat of Sunday school.

Let’s begin with asking a question. **What motivation is there for putting energy into communicating our faith?** I would like to suggest four reasons why

every one of us should be motivated and stay motivated in his or her own mission of spreading the faith to the people that are around us.

Turn to **II Kings 6**. We will begin in **verse 24**.

The first motivation for developing a contagious faith is what is called the “stockpile factor.”

I. THE STOCKPILE FACTOR

Look at **II Kings 6:24** with me.

Let’s understand a little better about what is going on here. In the beginning of chapter 6 we learn that the king of Aram had sent his troops to fight against Israel. For some time the Arameans have had a beef with Israel. We could go back to chapter 5 and read about Naaman. You know him, he was the guy who had leprosy that was told by Elisha to go dip in the Jordan River as a cure to his leprosy. Naaman was from Aram. In chapter 6 we see that the King of Aram was at war with Israel and he would send raiding groups to attack Israel, but every time they made a move God told Elisha who told the king of Israel helping Israel be prepared. The King of Aram was getting fed up thinking that one of his advisors was a spy informing the king of Israel with their battle plans. They informed the king that it wasn’t their fault. The fault was that the prophet Elisha would tell the king. So the king of Aram sent an army to the city of Dothan where Elisha was staying to capture him. When the servant got up early the next morning to get the Dothan Gazette from the porch he noticed the great army that surrounded them and became fearful. Elisha prayed and asked God to open the servant’s eyes so he could see for himself that the forces of God were mightier and more in number than the enemy forces. Then he prayed that the enemy army would all be struck with blindness. He then took them to the king of Israel, they were fed and released.

Here’s what’s happening. Since the time when the 10 tribes of Israel broke from the nation of Israel under king Rehoboam they continued to be

disobedient to God. God warned them that disobedience would result in three things. They would experience military defeat (Leviticus 26:17, 25, 33, 36-39; Deuteronomy 28:25-26, 24-52).

They would experience famine (Leviticus 26:26; Deuteronomy 28:17, 48).

They would experience cannibalism (Leviticus 26:29; Deuteronomy 28:53-57).

In **II Kings 6:24**, the nation of Israel is facing a siege by the Aramean army. King Joram and the people of the northern kingdom had failed to repent even after God had delivered the Aramean army into their hands by Elisha. They are suffering the consequences of repeated disobedience. No one can get in or go out. No supply camels can get to them with food items. We’re not sure how long this has been going on but we are told that the famine was so severe in the city of Samaria that a donkey’s head, the least nourishing and most repulsive part of the body, sold for an exorbitant amount of money. Feed given to animals was also sold to people as food. People had resorted to eating what was forbidden. According to the Old Testament law the donkey was considered unclean and was not to be eaten.

There was a serious food shortage in the city. Inflation skyrocketed and there was little food in the city because of the enemy siege. It was so bad that as we read on some of the people actually resorted to cannibalism (**verses 26-28**) the three things God said would happen for disobedience.

As the account continues we see that King Joram blamed Elisha rather than being accountable for his own sin. Elisha told the king that in a day a seah or about 7 quarts of flour would cost a shekel and a bushel of barley would cost a shekel. Understand that prior to the famine those were considered normal costs for those commodities, but under the circumstances they would have been considered a real bargain.

Two things are going on here. There is a tremendous physical famine and there is also a tremendous spiritual famine in the land.

Look at **II Kings 7:3-8** with me.

In the midst of the tragedy within the city, there is another story unfolding at the same time. Four lepers are living outside the city. Leprosy was a highly contagious disease and according to the law any person who was a leper was isolated from the general population. They were outcasts dependent on others for food. There was no cure for leprosy. They had figured out that they were as good as dead. So they considered their options. They could remain where they were and die. If they could somehow get into the city, they would die there because there wasn't much food in the city either. Or they could go to the enemy camp. Perhaps they would be compassionate and generous. If not, they would receive a swift death. They had nothing to lose. So in the evening they ventured to the enemy camp. Instead of meeting with sudden death or even antagonistic guards, they found the camp deserted. God had caused some noises to be heard in the night that confused the enemy into thinking they were under attack and fled. The lepers went from tent to tent feasting on more food than they had seen in a long time. Then they took some of the loot and hid it. They were stockpiling all the provisions they could. It was like hitting the lottery jackpot.

Notice **II Kings 7:9-11**.

A moment of guilt overwhelmed them. They concluded that what they were doing was wrong. They returned to the city gate and shouted to the guard the news of what they found.

For a moment let's focus our attention on the abundance of the provision that led them back to make this announcement to the people in the city. It was the fact that the provision was so large, the miracle so exciting, the news so wonderful, that

they concluded what they were doing was wrong. To them keeping silent about the news was an unthinkable crime. Instead of hoarding what they could, they needed to help with what they had.

While running errands one day, a well-known pastor ran into a man from his church who wanted to share something with him. The minute the guy began talking, he started tearing up. He said, "God did something in my life over Good Friday and Easter that was so rich, so cleansing, and so powerful in my life. I feel like I am just about ready to explode!" What he was really saying was that we have a spiritual stockpile that is so huge and so wonderful, it can hardly be contained.

When mature believers have a proper understanding of their spiritual inheritance, they can't stop themselves from spilling over into other people's lives! One of the most effective ways to develop a contagious faith is to stay mindful of the extent of our inheritance in Christ, the wonder of the character of the God we worship, and the magnitude of the miracle of transformation that has taken strangers and converted them into sons and daughters of God.

When you are living with an awareness of the size of your spiritual stockpile, you will find yourself saying to people outside God's family: "I don't know about you, but I know that as for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord." That has a way of finding a responsive chord in the life of a non-Christian.

We see people every day who go from bar to bar, toy to toy, fun-fix to fun-fix, lover to lover, fad to fad trying one thing after another only to crash and move on to something else where they'll crash again. We need to tell them to stop digging through the garbage pile and look at all the stockpile found in God's kingdom. God has plenty of grace and plenty of favor and plenty of love. There is more than enough for all who come to Him.

But take note that when you start believing that and living that, Satan is going to come along and tell you that instead of being spiritual royalty you're just spiritual paupers. Many believers walk around unaware of the scope of their stockpile in Christ, unaware of the extent to which they have been transformed, unaware of the new identity they have received in Christ. That's why it's so important to worship God regularly in private and in public and give Him thanks for His attributes and thank Him each day. Daily remind yourself of His promises. When we consider the stockpile we have in Christ we ought to be living life filled to the brim with a sense of spiritual wonder. That ought to be contagious to others. Such a life makes evangelistic opportunities easy.

One of the best motivations for you is to have the sense of wonder and gratitude about your spiritual stockpile.

The second motivation for developing a contagious faith is "the honor of being an agent of God."

II. THE HONOR OF BEING AN AGENT OF GOD

This idea comes from **Acts 1:8**. **"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."**

As God's ambassadors, agents, witnesses we are His "Plan A". He doesn't have a "Plan B" when it comes to spreading the Gospel. We're it.

Years ago when I worked in Human Resources and some employee got in trouble for attendance because the kids were sick a lot or other family emergencies came up, the manager would always tell the person they needed to have back up plans in place in case the normal one fell through.

God doesn't have a backup plan. He is counting on

us through the empowering of the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses around the world. In the middle of your uniqueness, personality, gifts, abilities, talents, and your particular arena of responsibility, you are called to speak for God, to speak of God to lost people who matter to Him, but who need one of His agents out there in the marketplace.

Let's not ever forget that every person matters to God. He loves the drug addict and the prostitute and the murderer and the guy with more colored tattoos and piercings than the Crayola 64 box of crayons. He loves the shop keeper and the assembly line worker and the business executive and the gas station clerk. People matter to God, that's why He sent His Son to die for them. If they matter to Him, they should matter to us.

Pastor Bill Hybels shares a story about bumping into an old acquaintance. He was a Christian who attended church regularly and so Bill asked him if he was looking forward to Easter. The man responded that he was not looking forward to it and in fact stated that he wasn't going to church on Easter. He said that he didn't go on Easter because he couldn't stand the "oners", the "annuals" the ones who only put in a showy appearance once a year and still call themselves a Christian. He said they mess everything up at church. They don't fool anyone. It bothered him so much that he just stopped going on Easter Sunday.

He clearly didn't have any use for them and probably believed God didn't either. We need to get over our preconceived notions that some people just don't fit the Christian mold so why bother with them. From the stories of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son we see that lost souls do matter to God. We are called to be God's agents.

Does it matter to us that one day we will stand before the God? Does it matter whether or not we hear the "well done good and faithful servant" expressed from His lips? That should motivate us.

People all around us desperately need us and God has put us into neighborhoods and families and work places where people need the Lord. He has commissioned us and filled us with His Spirit to reach them with the gospel. We are the light of the world. Maybe we should begin our day asking God to point out the people that matter to Him who need the seed of His Word planted in their heart all the while remembering from **Acts 1:8** that we aren't on our own. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be effective witnesses. My effectiveness as an agent of God though is directly linked to my being surrendered to the work of the Holy Spirit in my life. That we are an agent of God ought to motivate us to develop a contagious faith.

The third motivation for developing a contagious faith is "the reality of hell."

III. THE REALITY OF HELL

Hell is not a figment of the imagination or the creative flare of Hollywood. It is not the worst day of your life. It is something people don't want to talk about or even believe in, but the reality is that hell is an actual, physical place and without Christ real people will go there for eternity!

The topic of hell was a major theme of Jesus' teaching. We read time after time how Jesus was saddened and sometimes would even weep over various situations where people were confronted with the truth about Him, but rejected it. He grieved when the rich young ruler refused to receive spiritual wealth in exchange for temporal wealth because Jesus knew he was walking down the road that led to hell.

Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem, because He said He could see them as sheep wandering around without a shepherd and that it was only a matter of time before they would go off the cliffs of eternity into the abyss forever.

Jesus confronted the Pharisees, the Scribes, the tax collectors, and the politicians. He said that He came to seek and save the lost, but save from what? He came to save from the penalty of sin, that penalty being the judgment of hell, forever to be separated from God's love, grace and forgiveness. He confronted anybody and everybody with the basic message that unless they turn and put their faith in Him they would die in their sins and face condemnation for eternity.

Why did Jesus teach from early morning until late at night? Why did He keep the pace He did? Why did He endure the ridicule that He did? It was because He knew that people were on the road that was headed toward hell. It broke His heart and it motivated Him to spread the news of His grace. People mattered to Him. It mattered where they would spend eternity.

Turn for a moment to **Luke 16:19**. This is the well-known parable of the rich man who lived in splendor and a poor man named Lazarus who was starving to death at his gate. As the story goes, they both died. The poor man, Lazarus, had received God's forgiveness and went to heaven. The rich man ended up in hell.

Follow as I read **verses 23-27**.

Realizing that it was too late for him and that nothing could be done about his own agony he moved on to a second request. Though he couldn't do anything about his own plight, five minutes in hell made it very clear to him that his brothers needed an evangelist. Someone needed to go and warn his brothers that hell is real and real people go there and the way to get there is the way he thought would get him into heaven.

If we could hear the groaning's of the dead today, they would no doubt be crying out to us "people of Fellowship Bible Church, do whatever has to be

done to keep others from winding up here with me in hell.”

In case you were wondering, archeologists recently unearthed in Turkey what they call “the Gate to Hell” which is believed in mythology to be the portal that leads to the underworld.

Thinking about this passage in Luke 16, Bill Hybels gets fired up about spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and states that “Christianity is the greatest way to live and the only way to die!”

We need to get excited about heaven but we also need to remember there is a hell and we must not forget that there are people who are going there every day, people we know and rub shoulders with. The stakes are high. Maybe we’ve filtered out the voice of other friends we know died without Christ who are calling out like the rich man asking us to go to their family and tell them there is a real hell and they need the Savior.

Paul told the Corinthians that if there is no resurrection, if there is no heaven or hell then we might as well all just eat, drink and be merry. **If there is no judgment then why did Paul risk his life or take the beatings or suffer in prison? If there isn’t a hell then why come to church, why teach stories from a fictitious book, why pray or give to missions?** We must all be engaged in those activities if we are convinced that heaven and hell are real.

A personal prayer for me is that I might see people as God sees them; that I might have a greater burden for the lost and be emboldened by the Holy Spirit’s power to share the good news. **Isn’t that the conclusion the four lepers came to in II Kings 7?** They had such good news they couldn’t keep it to themselves. It was a day of salvation for the city. We have good news that will be salvation to people that will keep them out of hell.

Everything we do as a church should be taken with the utmost seriousness because through everything we do we should be trying to reach people with the gospel. Let’s pray that we won’t have a spirit of complacency or have a lack of urgency or think that the church only exists for us. The church isn’t just a place to come to; it is a place to go out from. When I place an online order, whatever it is goes to a hub where it is sent out to arrive at my home. What would happen if my package wasn’t sent out by UPS?

We need to remember we are on a mission as agents of Christ to spread the gospel rather than getting caught up in asking what the church has done for me. Let’s not lose the flavor of what a contagious faith is to be. Let’s not lose the enthusiasm of inviting people to church and earnestly praying for their soul. The stakes are too high for us just to be going through the motions of church. The stakes are eternal - eternal life or eternal death.

As Jesus hung on the cross bearing the full weight of the world’s sin on his shoulders his thoughts were abruptly interrupted when one of the criminals hanging beside him asked if there was room for one more sinner in heaven. He was racked with spiritual, physical and psychological pain, yet He was able to snatch one more sinner from the clutches of hell and tell the man he would be in paradise.

There is one more motivator. It’s “the reward of leading someone to Christ.”

IV. THE REWARD OF LEADING SOMEONE TO CHRIST

If just one time you have someone look you in the eye and thank you for being used by God to lead them to Christ, you know how motivating that is. [I have shared about my friend Mark from High School after almost 40 years writing to tell me he](#)

trusted Christ as his Savior and thanked me for being a witness to him.

When we get a “well done thank you” from a boss or a parent it motivates us to do more and do better. Hearing someone who trusts Christ as Savior say thanks for sharing the gospel with them gets the spiritual adrenalin flowing.

Why develop a contagious faith? Why share Christ with others? We have a stockpile of blessings and promises that we want to share with others. We have been commissioned as agents of the King of the universe empowered by His Spirit to lead others to Christ. I hope you will want to get involved either in Sunday school or the 2 sessions to go through this course on “Becoming a Contagious Christian.” We have the greatest news on the planet. Let’s not hoard it or hide it, let’s go find others with whom we can share it.

Even back in the 19th century, Alexander MacLaren preached against what he called a remarkable sense of man’s silence. In his commentary on II Kings 7 he asks a penetrating question: Have we never felt the obligation to make our Master known to others? He further states that “the meaning of the existence of a Christian Church is to raise up a cloud of witnesses and make every lip vocal with the name of Jesus Christ the Lord...the cure for silence is to keep near the Master and to drink in His Spirit.”

In our last service on this series, five weeks from now we’ll be looking at a contagious love. We’ll walk through how a person can understand and receive God’s forgiveness and have a personal relationship with Christ. It will be a good tool for each of us but also an opportunity to bring unsaved friends and family to.

Start today by asking God to put on your heart at least one person you will pray about sharing your faith with and about bringing to the service. Let’s ask God to work in a powerful way.

Next week we’ll look at a contagious heart.

Let me conclude with the word of the lepers from our text: **“Then they said to each other, ‘We’re not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves...Let’s go at once and report this to the royal palace.’”**
(II Kings 7:9)