



Back when I was in college, I read a book called *Becoming a Contagious Christian*. That phrase, “contagious Christian,” has stuck with me since then. We often associate the idea of being contagious with a negative perception because of diseases and sickness. But what if Christianity ought to be contagious? What if our love for Jesus Christ became so contagious that it couldn’t help but be spread wherever we went?

Today, I want to take this idea and talk about what it means to have a contagious faith. Next week, I also want to talk about how, if we call ourselves follower of Christ, we are supposed to do more than just sit in church services each week. There is more to being a follower of Christ than sitting in a Bible study while we relegate the Great Commission of spreading the gospel to missionaries and pastors. Going to church and Bible studies are great, but they don’t make up for a lack of outward focus.

If our salvation was only about us, then the moment I gave my heart to Jesus Christ in kids’ church in the 1st grade, or the moment you gave your life to Christ at an altar or in your family’s living room, then Jesus would have just taken us up to heaven immediately. He knows that we’re sinners and we would mess things up and have to ask for forgiveness if we stayed. If salvation was all about us, then we wouldn’t be here right now. But we’re still here. There has to be more to being a follower of Christ than just being saved.

And the longer we’re Christians without understanding this purpose we have after salvation, the easier it is for us to be inward focused instead of outward focused. We can get so easily entangled and ensnared in the internal issues, questions, and personal situations within our church that it’s hard to remember that the primary reason we remain on this planet is to reach the people out there with the good news about Jesus.

This isn’t just a problem for our church. Unfortunately, the inward focused church is the type of Christianity that has been spreading instead of the contagious Christianity that changes lives. And don’t get me wrong, there are many of you who are reaching out, and that’s great. But for all of us, we all could use a wake-up call and a self-examination to see if our faith has

become selfish and inward focused, and we need to turn it to fulfill the calling Jesus has given us.

Back in the gospels, when Jesus was on Earth, there was a group of Jewish religious leaders called the Pharisees. Now, when we hear of a Pharisee today, we immediately drop them in the “bad guy” category, but back then, they were the most religious people around. They were the ones who today wouldn’t miss a church service. They would probably be the ones hosting Bible studies, and they knew more of the Old Testament than every person in this room.

But in Luke 15, Jesus found Himself surrounded by a large crowd made up of tax collectors and sinners; the undesirables that some would think God wouldn’t possibly want. And the religious leaders, who were Pharisees and teachers of the Old Testament Scriptures, complained about the fact that Jesus, who claimed to be the Son of God, was spending time with those people.

So, Jesus, talking to this crowd of sinners and to this group of pious religious men standing on the side, began to tell a powerful series of stories.

“Suppose this guy has a hundred sheep, and one runs away,” Jesus said. Wouldn’t he leave the ninety-nine who are safe in the open field to go find the one? Of course, he would. And when he found this one, he would go home with that sheep on his shoulders and celebrate with his family. And Jesus continued, “I tell you that in the same way, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” And as He said that last line about the ninety-nine, I could imagine Jesus looking up at the Pharisees, who thought they do not need to repent, especially when compared to the group of sinners who surrounded Jesus. He just made the statement that heaven considers it better that just one of these sinners gets saved than a bunch of religious people going about their daily lives not realizing their need for a savior.

But Jesus didn’t stop there. While He had their attention, He started talking about a woman who had ten silver coins and lost one. This one coin was so valuable to her, because it was one-tenth of everything she possessed. So, she searched her whole house carefully until she found it. And when she

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