

**“Becoming a Contagious Christian: What’s Your Style?”**

Date: April 10, 2011

Place: Lakewood UMC

Text: Matthew 28:16-20

Theme: Faith-sharing, Witnessing

Occasion: Introduction to the study: *Becoming a Contagious Christian*

People are different, did you know that? Everybody is not alike. Now, most of us think we understand that concept, but in reality, we usually think that everybody else is just like us. It’s why boyfriends and girlfriends tend to fight. He doesn’t do things her way, or she doesn’t do things his way. And they get mad at each other. “Why can’t you be more like me?” (They think). Oh, boy! Is that a recipe for disaster.

We’ve been talking for the last couple of Sundays about learning how to share our faith. It’s something that we all agree Christians should do. But for most of us, we’re not very comfortable doing it. I’m going to be leading a study group, beginning tomorrow night called *Becoming a Contagious Christian*. There is still room for a few more people to sign up. I hope that some of you will.

In that class, one of the things that we’re going to learn, is that people have different styles of sharing their faith. There is no one and perfect way to be contagious for Jesus. We all have our own unique personalities, and personal history. We all have different backgrounds, different interests, different hobbies. We’re all different ages, and at different stages of life. Jesus can use all of that difference, to reach different people.

You see, we’re not all meant to be the same. God designed us that way. God delights in variety. Just look at all the different kinds of birds there are, and the different kinds of plants and animals. God delights in variety. And God will use our uniqueness to reach different kinds of people. It’s all part of God’s plan and design.

Sometimes, I think we believe that if we’re going to be a witness for Jesus,

then our witness is going to have to be like somebody else's. Somebody that we admire. Maybe we think we should be like Billy Graham, and give eloquent sermons. Forget it. Billy Graham is one of a kind. God doesn't expect you to be like Billy Graham. God wants you to be yourself, and to use yourself to share the love of God.

Would you like to know your style, and who is like you in the Bible, and how you can use your unique style to reach people for Jesus Christ? That's part of what we're going to be doing in these next six weeks together, on Monday night. Discovering our own style, and learning how to use our style to be contagious for Jesus.

Our authors suggest six different personality types, and styles of sharing the faith. Basically what we're saying is this. Don't try to be somebody else. Don't try to imitate someone else. Don't try to be somebody that you're not. Be yourself, and learn how to use your own personality to share Jesus.

And that's all that we're asked to do. We're not asked to convert anybody, or to try and persuade them to think differently. All that God asks us to do is to share the love of Jesus with another person, doing it in a way that honors our own personalaity.

For example, one of the styles that's described in our study is simply called the "serving style." A person with this style is patient, thinks about other people, sees a need and finds joy in meeting that need. Such a person shows love more through action than through words. This person attaches value to even menial tasks.

If this describes you, then you're invited to find creative ways to communicate God's love through service: it could be through a word, a card or a helping hand. If you keep your eyes open, you will find all kinds of opportunities to do something kind and helpful for another person. This is your style, serving others:

use your God-given gift.

Ah, but somebody else may have another style altogether different. Some people are highly intellectual. They love to analyze ideas. They're very logical. They're inquisitive. This kind of a person may like to debate. They're more concerned with what people think, than how they feel. Their witness would be very different than the service witness. They would spend time in study, preparing their thoughts and what they would say. But they need to work on their people skills, so they don't put their friends off.

Somebody else may have another style. They're good at giving a personal testimony. They're not really into the intellectual arguments of the faith, they just want to share what God has done in their life. They're good listeners, and they know how to relate something that has happened to themselves, with something that's going on in their friend's life. Based on their own personal experience, they love to share how God has touched their life.

Another person may be more of a friend than a salesman. They have an interpersonal style, meaning they value friendship over winning an argument. They're warm and friendly. They tend to focus on people and their needs. They're compassionate. Their style of sharing the faith tends to work more gradually than others. But they look for and pray for opportunities to turn daily conversations towards spiritual matters.

And then, there are some people who are just plain direct. They're like that in all things, including their faith. They're bold and confident, they're assertive and full of conviction. They skip the small talk, and get right to the point. For them, their growing edge would be to learn how to slow down, and avoid judging people.

There is one more style that we need to mention, and that's the invitational style. These folks enjoy meeting new people. They are hospitable, and like to invite

their friends to do new things. Their style would be to invite their friends to come to a concert at church, or come to a dinner and hear a speaker. They're good at inviting.

People are different. Did you know that? No one of us is going to be contagious for Jesus, exactly like I would do it, or you would do it. And did you notice as I was describing those different styles, that maybe you had qualities in a couple of different styles? Great! Because the people you meet will be different. And with one person, it would be great to invite them to an event, while someone else you may need to share the logic of our faith, or another friend may need a lot of help and love.

We use our different styles to reach different people.

Before Jesus went back to Heaven, to be with His Heavenly Father, he gave what we call the Great Commission. He said, "Go and make disciples." That task was not given just to the remaining eleven disciples. It was a command to every Christian who decides to follow Jesus. We are all commissioned to share the good news of God's love, as shown in Jesus Christ.

I hope that you're excited about this new adventure that we're all going to be a part of. Becoming a contagious Christian, inviting others to consider Jesus, helping others with acts of kindness, explaining our faith, simply being a friend. We're all different. But different is good. Because different allows us to reach a wider audience.

I'll be praying for you, and I would ask you to pray for me, so that we may all discover our own personal style, and allow God to use us to share our faith in Jesus Christ. Amen? Amen. Let us pray.