

## CONTAGIOUS—SHARING JESUS/GOING VIRAL

### Infesting Those Nearest Us

John 1:35-45

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LISTEN: <http://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/infesting-those-nearest-us/>

Here's a riddle. What's worse than a mom at home with four sick kids? A sick mom at home with four well kids. It's that time of year—children bring home all the germs from school! Contagious! But we've been talking these last few weeks about a good kind of contagious, sharing Christ. Several years ago, Janet and I drove to the city to spend the weekend with some friends. He was a school administrator and she was a homemaker, both leading very busy lives. During the course of the weekend, they casually mentioned the spiritual condition of each person who lived on their cul-de-sac. **Our faith becomes contagious when we focus on relationships.**

In our scripture, Andrew perfectly demonstrates that. We see him in three, brief snapshots in the gospel accounts, and each time, through existing relationships, he is bringing someone to Christ. First, in John 6, he is connecting a little boy who has loaves and fish with Jesus, who multiplies the food miraculously. Next, in John 12, Andrew is bringing some inquiring Greeks into Jesus' presence. Finally, this one, in which Andrew is bringing his brother to Christ. Do you see a pattern?

**Our faith becomes contagious when we verbally tell our story to others.** Now let's face it. We're all a little bashful, aren't we? We'd like to think that our Christ-like behavior is enough. But we need to verbalize our faith. You see, testimonies are powerful, because no one can refute your story and say it isn't true (they can do that with scripture or church teachings). Notice all the ways that verbal witness is used in this scripture. John the Baptist testifies (vv. 35-36). Then Andrew tells Peter (vv. 40-42). Then, Philip tells Nathanael (vv. 43-45).

Tim Keller has pointed out that nearly every time the word evangelism is used in the New Testament, it's connected to verbal expression of the good news. It is put in words which local culture can understand [*Christian Century*, June 22, 2106, p. 11]. And they are to be words specifically about Jesus Christ. It's nice to invite people to church (I wish more of you would). But Andrew didn't invite Peter to the synagogue. He told him about Christ and brought him to him. And later, Philip told Nathanael, "This is the One we've read about in the Bible!"

**Our faith becomes contagious when we ask questions and are open to questions.** Note Jesus' question to the seekers in v. 38, "What are you looking for?" Clarifying questions work much better than pounding them with twenty Bible verses. What are you looking for? Success, security, popularity, riches, being loved, inner peace?

Would you agree with me that we live in a skeptical age? People are cynical about the church and religion. Note what Jesus said to the seekers after he asked what they were after (v. 39): "Come and see." Explore for yourself. Jesus is open to inspection and is not afraid to be scrutinized. We need to give the unbeliever time and space.

Ian Cron has written, “I’d like to be known as a ‘come and see’ Christian [who belongs to] a ‘come and see’ church. Come and see how we love the poor; come and see how we give dignity back to those who’ve lost it or given it away; come and see how we encounter God...” [*Chasing Francis*, p. 207].

***Our faith becomes contagious when we are personal and positive.*** Consider how most people view evangelical Christianity--negative, hate-filled, judgmental, holier-than-thou, harsh. Note how Jesus deals with Simon Peter (v. 42). Jesus’ dealings with Peter are individualized, personal. Not the exact same thing Jesus said to another person. Peter is not a commodity, a scalp on Jesus’ belt, a customer. He is a person of infinite value and worth. And Jesus doesn’t dwell on the past, but sees what Peter can become. He doesn’t focus on the past, but on the possibilities.

Many of you will remember Rev. Paul Msiza, president of the Baptist World Alliance, who preached at our Ash Wednesday service. He pastors a church in South Africa and tells of about the importance of consistent, loving faith-sharing. He writes about Ms. Qothiwe Maria Mahlangu, whom he baptized. She gave her testimony before he dunked her and told how for 18 long years, she resisted Jesus. But her sister relentlessly witnessed to her about Jesus Christ. And her sister never gave up. Ms. Mahlangu says that because of her sister, God kept the door of salvation open for her. Pastor Paul reminds us that in many churches, evangelism is dying, replaced by programs. [*The Baptist World*, Oct-Dec., 2016, p. 31]. But sharing our faith is not a program. It’s a way of life. And it is contagious.