

CONTAGIOUS FAITH

Discover Your Natural Style for
Sharing Jesus with Others

MARK MITTELBERG

 ZONDERVAN
REFLECTIVE

Mark Mittelberg thinks intentionally about evangelism probably more than anyone else I know. His insights are always biblical and creative. That's why I read everything he writes. I highly recommend this newest book, *Contagious Faith*. It's filled with practical advice on how to share your faith in these days.

RICK WARREN, founding and senior pastor of Saddleback Church, author of *The Purpose Driven Life*

Contagious Faith is my favorite book on evangelism. It is so empowering to know, as Mark explains, that God has wired us uniquely with different ways of doing evangelism. Whether you are an introvert or extrovert, a thinker or a feeler, this book will give you practical ways of sharing your faith that reflect how God has made you to help build his kingdom.

SEAN MCDOWELL, PhD, speaker, professor at Biola University, coauthor of *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*

We have the beautiful gift of salvation, but many of us are intimidated about sharing it with others. In *Contagious Faith*, Mark Mittelberg will show you how to use your talents, gifting, and personality for the glory of God. Winsome, accessible, and jam-packed with solid information!

ALISA CHILDERS, host of the Alisa Childers Podcast, author of *Another Gospel? A Lifelong Christian Seeks Truth in Response to Progressive Christianity*

Churches have either forgotten that seeking and saving the lost was Christ's mission or they simply don't know how to be effective at it. Mark has laid out the most in-depth strategy for churches and individuals to share the gospel. It has been a game changer at my home church—Christ Church in northeast Louisiana!

WILLIE ROBERTSON, CEO of Duck Commander and Buck Commander, star of A&E's *Duck Dynasty*

You are holding more than a book in your hand. You are holding a match that can spark a revival fire that will ignite a family, a community, a workplace, a school, and even a whole nation with the glory and power of God. If you'll read and apply the practical wisdom in *Contagious Faith*, there's no telling how God will work in and through your life.

MATT BROWN, evangelist, founder of Think Eternity, author of *Truth Plus Love*

Mark is one of my faith heroes and, I believe, among the most important writers of our time. *Contagious Faith* is a masterpiece that combines a biblical rationale with practical counsel and dozens of real-life stories. A powerful guide for discovering the kind of "inner evangelist" I am, I'm confident it will help you discover the same for yourself.

RASHAWN COPELAND, evangelist, founder of Blessed Media, author of *Start Where You Are*

Mark Mittelberg's wonderful new book, *Contagious Faith*, is a joy to read! Highly motivational and a much-needed reminder that God delights in using all of us who follow Jesus. In a time when people are desperate for good news, *Contagious Faith* helps us share the Best News Ever!

REBECCA MANLEY PIPPERT, author of *Out of the Saltshaker and Into the World* and *Stay Salt: The World Has Changed, Our Message Must Not*

The greatest evangelistic tool you have at your disposal is you. Effective evangelism happens by employing yourself in the service of the King to naturally and contextually engage others with the good news of Jesus Christ. If you don't know how to do this, my friend Mark Mittelberg wrote *Contagious Faith* to help you find your natural approach.

ED STETZER, executive director, Wheaton College Billy Graham Center

In *Contagious Faith*, Mark doesn't bring us another trend. He brings us a foundation for evangelism you'll want to act upon and then share with your friends. His five Faith Styles will surely get you thinking and, more importantly, acting.

CAREY NIEUWHOF, author of *At Your Best*, podcaster and speaker

We know we should share our faith with others but often struggle with a sense of inadequacy, not knowing where to begin. In this book, Mark Mittelberg gives us the inspiration and practical tools we need to reach others with the gospel. He also reminds us that we are uniquely created by God—gifted to share Jesus in different ways.

DR. MICHAEL L. BROWN, host of the Line of Fire radio broadcast,
author of *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, 5 volumes

Nothing enhances my witness more than having a good relationship of trust with the person I'm sharing the gospel. In this context the one I'm burdened for has the opportunity to observe the fruit of God's Spirit in my life in many different settings. In *Contagious Faith*, Mark helps us understand the variety of ways God works in making our faith real to that person.

JOHNNY HUNT, pastor, author, and former president
of the Southern Baptist Convention

My favorite books are the ones by authors who I know are living out what they've written. That's why I highly recommend *Contagious Faith* by my friend Mark Mittelberg. It provides practical ways to live a truly contagious faith—one that those who desperately need Jesus will want to catch!

SHANE PRUITT, national Next Gen director of the North
American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention,
author of *9 Common Lies Christians Believe*

Mark Mittelberg has done it again. While the Good News of Jesus never loses its power to change lives, we need to find fresh ways to talk about it and be renewed in our passion for doing so. *Contagious Faith* reveals five biblical approaches to sharing our faith that fit who God uniquely made us.

KEVIN PALAU, president and CEO of the Luis Palau Association

For too long we've accepted a version of Christian faith that believers think they can keep to themselves. But this looks nothing like Jesus and it's not found in the Bible. In *Contagious Faith*, my friend Mark Mittelberg leads us on a journey of what it looks like to fall in love with the greatest thing on earth—Jesus—to the point you can no longer keep him to yourself.

NICK HALL, evangelist, founder of Pulse, author of the book *Reset*

Contagious Faith tackles head-on the truth that Jesus calls every Christian to share the gospel. If that scares you, then this book is for you. Mark outlines how God can use your unique wiring (yes, *yours*) to reach others for the kingdom. He provides practical tips on maximizing your gifts and personality, and helps you learn from other people's strengths too.

GREG STIER, founder/visionary of Dare 2 Share, author of *Unlikely Fighter: The Story of How a Fatherless Street Kid Overcame Violence, Chaos & Confusion to Become a Radical Christ Follower*

Mark Mittelberg has written a terrific guide on how to share your faith in a way that is responsible, faithful, kind, and plays to your own personal gifts. Whether you're a life-of-the-party extrovert or quietly bookish, you can still have a contagious faith. Mark shows you how!

MICHAEL BIRD, PhD University of Queensland, academic dean and lecturer in theology at Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia

I have known and respected Mark for over three decades and commend his ministry, this new book, and his life-changing vision for contagious faith to every Christian who wants to see more people find and follow Jesus. If you want a partner in helping you learn to share your faith in winsome and effective ways, I can think of no better person than Mark Mittelberg.

KEVIN G. HARNEY, founder and visionary leader of Organic Outreach International, author of the *Organic Outreach* trilogy and *Organic Disciples: Seven Ways to Grow Spiritually and Naturally Share Jesus*

When Jesus locked eyes with his disciples to give the Great Commission mandate, he was looking through them at us—his followers throughout time. *Contagious Faith* is a joyous invitation to join Jesus in reaching our neighbors, both local and global. My advice: handle with care. Once you crack it open, you won't be able to contain its infectious message!

DAVID JOANNES, founder/CEO of Within Reach Global, author of *The Mind of a Missionary and Gospel Privilege*

I love how my friend Mark Mittelberg teaches us natural ways to help spiritually wayward sons and daughters find their way back to the Father, and to give them a rock-solid assurance through the gospel that surely heaven waits for them.

KERRY LIVGREN, founding member/songwriter for the band Kansas, writer of "Carry On Wayward Son"

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Contagious Faith

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To Effa Mittelberg, whose contagious
faith influenced her entire family for
five generations . . . and counting.

And to O. H. “Mitt” Mittelberg, whose walk
with Christ marked my life . . . for eternity.

*I am grateful for the “sincere faith, which first
lived in [my] grandmother [Effa] and in [my
father, Orland] and, I am persuaded, now
lives in [me, my children, and beyond].”*

—2 TIMOTHY 1:5, PARAPHRASED

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FOREWORD

BY LEE STROBEL

Few things deter people from Christianity as much as hypocritical leaders in the church—that is, speakers and authors whose behind-the-scenes lifestyle is antithetical to what they preach from the pulpit or write about in their books.

What's the opposite of a hypocrite? My friend Mark Mittelberg.

Most people only know Mark from his global impact as a sought-after speaker and vigorous champion of personal evangelism. He has trained more people to share their faith than anyone else in his generation. He's considered one of the world's leading authorities on how Christians can naturally talk about Jesus in a way that's winsome and attractive. Churches constantly pursue his insights on how they can become more effective in reaching their community with the gospel.

But I've known the personal side of Mark for more than three decades. As his close friend, I've seen him in countless private moments—in his neighborhood, his home, restaurants, and traveling. And with Mark, what you see in public is what you get in private.

For instance, his friendships in the small Colorado community where he lives has lit the fuse on a mini revival there. As appropriate opportunities have arisen, Mark has faithfully told his neighbors about Jesus, and one by one they have come to faith and been baptized in backyard pools or spas. Then these new believers tell someone else about Jesus, and yet another person is

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reborn. It's as if faith were—well, *contagious!* Which, of course, is the theme of this book.

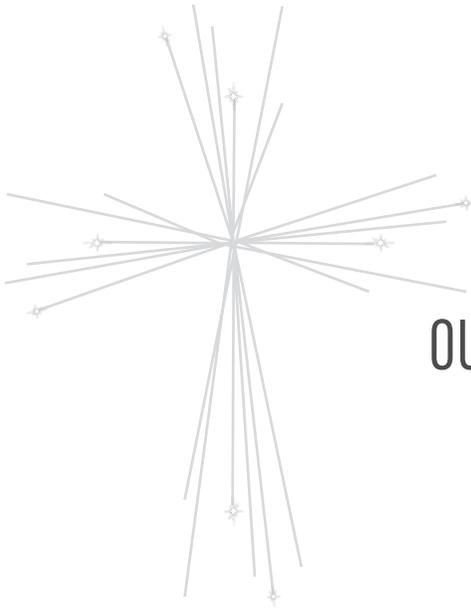
In these pages, Mark will help liberate your “inner evangelist.” In other words, authentic Christians have a deep desire to see others receive Jesus as their forgiver and leader, but they tend to shrink back from telling them about the gospel because they're uncomfortable with stereotypical approaches to proselytizing.

Mark will reveal how God can use you and your personality to reach out with the gospel in ways that are authentic to who God made you to be. It's an encouraging truth—I don't have to share my faith like you, and you don't have to share it like me. You can be *you*—and God can use *you* to spread his message of hope and grace to one person at a time.

I've seen God use this kind of teaching to transform once-reticent Christians into people who are truly excited about bringing the gospel to friends, neighbors, colleagues, family members, and people they meet along the road of life. Fear dissipates, and Christians become more comfortable in talking about their faith in genuine ways that sync up with their God-given temperament.

Trust me—this book could very well be the launching pad of a newfound life of spiritual adventure for you! In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus urged us to be salt and light in our increasingly desperate world. He was saying we should live in a way that makes people thirst for God and which shines his message of love and redemption into dark areas of despair.

Discover how you can become *stronger* salt and *brighter* light for the sake of the gospel and the glory of God. Along the way, you'll have the time of your life doing it!



OUR CONTAGIOUS CALLING

“We were meant to live for so much more . . .”

So declares the popular Switchfoot song, *Meant to Live*. The lyrics echo what we are told both by our hearts and God’s Word—we really *were* made to live for greater purposes.

More than the typical Christian life. More than just going to school. More than finding a meaningful career. More than the possibility of getting married, having a family, or someday settling down and retiring. And yes, even more than finding God’s forgiveness, going to church, and serving others—great as those are.

We were made to know God but also to introduce him to others. To share the love and truth of Jesus with the people around us. To reach them for him. To help them find and follow Christ—and then, in turn, to assist them in helping *others* find and follow Christ as well.

“As the Father has sent me,” Jesus declared, “I am sending

you” (John 20:21). And he added, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Our faith is not just for ourselves. It’s not to be hoarded. It’s meant to be spread to others. To be infectious. *Contagious*.

Why Contagious?

It’s a word we’ve been hearing a lot lately. The world has been swept up in a pandemic, and we’ve been bombarded with warnings designed to prevent us from catching this highly communicable virus.

Stay home, stay safe. Wear a mask. Stop the spread. In such an environment, there’s no more troublesome thought than the fear that you might be contagious.

But amid the cautions to cover coughs and squelch sneezes, I’m reminded of times in my life when I caught something that I couldn’t resist—and didn’t really want to. Times, for example, when I felt down and defeated, but then a friend’s contagious optimism inspired me. There’s contagious enthusiasm. Contagious excitement. Contagious laughter.

Contagious isn’t always a bad thing. It describes something irresistible, something you can’t help but catch, and something you have the potential to spread.

What if our *faith* were contagious? What if instead of quietly clinging to our relationship with Christ and succumbing to the societal sentiment that faith should be private, we realized that faith is for sharing? That Jesus came not just for me and you but to be the Savior of the world—and that he wants us to share the Good News about him with others?

When Jesus gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20—when he told us to go into all the world to make disciples—he was giving us a mission to share a *contagious faith*. He wanted us to intentionally go into our circles of influence and beyond, telling anyone who would listen about his love and truth. And our goal (borrowing Merriam-Webster’s definition of *contagious*) is to *excite similar emotions and conduct in others*¹—and, I would add, *beliefs* as well.

In so doing, God will use us to infectiously spread our faith to a few other people who will, in turn, carry it to others, who will then relay it to still more. In this way, what Jesus unleashed through his handful of disciples on a hillside two millennia ago will be transmitted through us, and through those we reach, until it ultimately expands to the ends of the earth. In fact, Jesus promised that before he returns, “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations” (Matthew 24:14).

It’s a lofty vision, but also an exceedingly important and fulfilling one. And it’s for all of us who name Christ as our forgiver and leader. More than that, it’s a thrilling journey—the most exciting and rewarding thing we can do with our lives.

That said, I understand—you’re not so sure about your role in all of this . . . *yet!*

At one time I wasn’t sure about my role in it either. But read on, friend. You’re in for a wonderful journey. Dare I say, *an unexpected adventure*.



CHAPTER 1

REACHED BY GOD TO REACH OTHERS

*Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders;
make the most of every opportunity.*

—COLOSSIANS 4:5

Why me? I wondered.

Why would God ask someone like me—who just weeks earlier had been recklessly partying and resisting him—to be the one to talk about spiritual stuff to someone like Peggy?

It wasn't that I didn't want to encourage her. We had been friends in high school, we were on the drama team and in a few of the same plays, and we'd even been at some parties together. But now my life had changed radically. I'd trusted in Christ, though I wasn't quite sure what that was going to look like.

Peggy had recently started visiting a Bible study that I attended, and I'd been sensing that God wanted me to talk to her about it. I couldn't get away from the concern that she was

becoming acclimated to our Christian culture but missing the central point of what it means to become a true follower of Christ.

But, again, why me? I barely knew what I was doing. I was only nineteen years old and had put my trust in him less than two months earlier. I had not been trained to share my faith. I hadn't been through any evangelism courses. I felt like a novice when it came to discussing God's activity in my life . . . because, well, I *was* a novice. I just knew that I needed to do so, and I was willing to try—even if it meant feeling awkward in the process.

An Unexpected Adventure

As I was crossing the Eighth Street Bridge in our hometown, I saw Peggy walking alone on the snow-packed sidewalk. I was surprised that anyone would be out for a stroll on such a frigid December day, but I believed this could be the opportunity God had been pointing me toward.

I pulled my car to the side of the road and rolled down the passenger window to say hello (yes, we actually had to *roll down* our windows in those days). We chatted for a few minutes, and then I mentioned the study group. She told me she was enjoying it, loved meeting so many new friends, and was learning from the discussions.

"I'm glad you're growing in your understanding of God and the Bible," I said, as I took a deep breath and tried to sound more confident than I actually felt. "But there's something I've been meaning to ask you."

"What's that?" Peggy replied.

"I'm curious to know . . ." I said, trying to muster the courage

to get to the heart of the matter, “. . . whether you’ve ever really asked for Jesus’s forgiveness and committed your life to him?”

“No, I’ve never done that,” Peggy said. “And nobody has ever told me I needed to!”

Trading Places

Let’s hit the pause button and trade places. You’re talking to your friend and suddenly the conversation shifts from breezy banter to a serious spiritual exchange. She has just told you she’s never really understood the offer of the gospel and has never asked to receive salvation through Christ.

What would you say to your friend? Would you “be prepared to give an answer” (1 Peter 3:15) and to explain the core message of the Christian faith? Or would you change the subject and talk about something less intimidating? Would you say something about how important the topic is and suggest raising it at a future Bible study? Would you declare a timeout and call in a professional—maybe a pastor, or at least a more seasoned follower of Christ? Or might you be tempted to suddenly pretend there was an urgent matter elsewhere that you needed to attend to?

Stumbling Forward

Any of those options might have been attractive to me at that point—except for the nagging awareness I had that God had seemingly brought us to this moment and wanted to work through our conversation despite my insecurities.

I’m not sure what I was so afraid of. Maybe I was worried that Peggy would think I was judging her, or that I was trying to push

her into a commitment she wasn't ready to make. Or perhaps it was the very real possibility that she would be open and ready to trust in Christ—but I wouldn't say things clearly and instead would squander the opportunity. Whatever the source of my trepidation, it turned out to be an unwarranted concern.

“Well,” I replied, feeling a tinge of Holy Spirit-inspired confidence, “you really *do* need to ask Jesus for his forgiveness and leadership in your life.” Then I started doing my best to explain what that means, including telling her how I had given my life to Christ just weeks earlier.

To my relief, she seemed receptive—but she also let me know she needed to get back home soon for a family dinner. She quickly added that she'd like to continue talking later that evening, if I'd be willing to swing by. I said I would, and I silently prayed that God would move in her heart, opening her to the gospel.

God Worked—In Spite of Me

When we picked up the discussion later that night, I found out that God had been working in Peggy's life in a variety of ways. She had a formal church background but had walked away from it in junior high. Now, after graduating from high school and spending a summer working at Yellowstone National Park, Peggy had a renewed interest in spiritual matters. In fact, God was speaking to her through a Bible she had “stolen” from a hotel room in Yellowstone (not realizing that the Gideons put them there *hoping* people will “steal” them); through several of her Christian friends; through our Bible study; through a service at a church the night before; and now through our interactions.

By the time our conversation was over, Peggy was ready to

ask Jesus for his forgiveness and guidance in her life. With my heart beating fast, I did my fledgling best to lead her in a coherent prayer of repentance and faith. In spite of my inadequacies, the Holy Spirit worked in a powerful way—and Peggy’s life and eternity were changed. What a thrill it was for me to help seal her relationship with God!

And how exhilarating it will be for *you* to be used in similar ways—whether you feel up to the task yet or not!

God Will Work through You

Deep down we all want our lives to count for things that last. But think about this: the only things in this world that we can take with us into eternity are *people*.

Wouldn’t you like to be used by God to impact people’s lives and eternities? It can happen. But what will it take? What are some of the key truths we’ll need to embrace in order to move forward in the adventure of reaching others with the best news the world has ever known?

Let’s look at some evangelism essentials. I urge you to approach these prayerfully, asking God’s Spirit to guide you concerning any areas you might need to reflect on, pray over, or shore up in your life. These are foundational for your journey toward having a more contagious faith.

Essentials for a Contagious Faith

This Is God’s Mission

It’s vital for us to understand and embrace this first component. Reaching people with the gospel was not *our* idea. It’s not

OUR CONTAGIOUS CALLING

something we came up with and are now asking God to help us accomplish. No, it's the opposite. It was the heavenly Father who "so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

It was that Son, Jesus, who willingly "came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10), and then told us to go into our world to do the same (Matthew 28:18–20). Jesus also promised us the Holy Spirit, from whom we would "receive power," so that we could become his "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

So, *God's* mission of rescuing wayward sons and daughters has now become *our* mission—and fortunately he promises to be with us always, even "to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Pastor and author Henry Blackaby reminds his listeners that we need to "watch to see where God is working and join Him in His work." Well, God's work is clearly to reach and redeem people who are far from him. We can have supreme confidence that we are joining him in doing just that, knowing that his gospel is still "the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

The God of the universe is already on a mission to seek and save the lost—and we have the privilege of joining him in his mission.

This Mission Is for Every Believer

It's tempting to think that God's challenge to reach a lost world is a task that's reserved for elite Christians—those with special gifts or training. But that isn't the case. *We are all members of the*

church to which Jesus gave the Great Commission. Specifically, when he looked eyes with his disciples in Matthew 28:19–20, he was looking through them at us—all of his followers throughout time.

“Go and make disciples of all nations,” he told us, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” And, as we saw earlier, in Acts 1:8 he added, “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Yes, these words are for you and me—and for everyone who is a genuine follower of Jesus. They are God’s exciting invitation into a divine partnership to change our world. We can’t do this without God, but for reasons he doesn’t explain, he chooses to do this with and through us.

You’ll often feel like you’re out of your league. We all do. There are times when you’ll be nervous and tempted to keep your mouth shut. I get it. Your heart will be beating fast and your palms will sweat. Join the club. But God knows how to help us, to use us, and to change people’s eternities through the divinely directed efforts we’ll make.

We Must Have It before We Can Give It Away

There are plenty of nominal (“in name only”) Christians who attend our churches and even our classes and small groups. Researcher George Barna and his team, who have studied this phenomenon for decades, have found that, on average, about half of the people who sit in churches each week have never truly trusted Christ. This is a sobering reality—even a frightening one.

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More than that, it's a great reason for self-examination. Paul admonished us as members of the church to "examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Our salvation depends on knowing and trusting the Savior. But it's also critical to the contagion of our faith. After all, you can't give away what you don't genuinely have. As my friend Steve Macchia explains in his book, *Becoming a Healthy Church*, evangelism is best described as *overflow*—it's letting the good we have in Christ spill over into the lives of the people around us.¹ But that means we need to really have it first.

Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3:15 that in our hearts we must "revere Christ as Lord"—meaning we need to make sure he has his proper place as the master of our lives—and *then* we can effectively "be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." Being right with our Savior is the prerequisite; out of that proper relationship he can equip and use us to answer people's questions and impact their lives.

How about you? Are there things you need to address in your relationship with God? "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness," Jesus told us in Matthew 6:33—and then everything else can flow out of that healthy relationship with him.

Let me urge you: don't gloss over this point. Like David writes in Psalm 139:23–24, come before God and sincerely ask him,

Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Then confess, give up, or change anything he shows you. As honestly and completely as you know how, receive his forgiveness and “sanctify Christ as Lord”—and then let him lead you forward on this great outreach adventure together.

God Can Use Us at Any Stage of Development

Our spiritual enemy, Satan, loves to whisper in our ear that we’re not good enough, we don’t know enough, or we haven’t walked with God long enough for him to really use us.

“Wait until you’ve gotten all the sin out of your life,” he murmurs, while giving you a poignant reminder of the last time you disobeyed God. “And while you’re cleaning up your act, you should probably wait until you’ve read all those religious books you’ve been stacking up—or better yet, go earn a seminary degree or two. Then God might *finally* be able to do something worthwhile with you.”

No wonder Revelation 12:10 calls him “the accuser.”

Even the apostle Paul sometimes struggled with weakness and inadequacy. He took these feelings to God who told him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Paul’s conclusion? “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. *For when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Corinthians 12:9–10, emphasis mine).

Paul also warned Timothy to “Be prepared in season and out of season . . . do the work of an evangelist,” (2 Timothy 4:2, 5). Here’s the truth: most of us feel “out of season” most of the time. But if we’ll make ourselves available to him, he knows how to

make up the difference, using us at whatever our current stage of development might be.

We Must Be Fueled by Love

God, by his very nature, is love (1 John 4:8). And we, as his children, are to reflect his love. In fact, Matthew tells us that when Jesus saw the crowds, “*he had compassion on them*, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36, emphasis mine). Ed Stetzer explains, “the term ‘compassion’ means the visceral organs—a deep, gut-wrenching affection.”²

Stetzer also points out that it was Jesus’s heartfelt compassion that compelled him to declare in the next two verses, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (verses 37–38). Jesus’s loving concern for people led to his desire to commission more and more contagious carriers of his message who would work to reach them.

In addition, Paul says, “Christ’s love compels us,” and he adds that he “has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:14, 19–20). See how experiencing the love of Christ flows naturally into the work of reaching people *for* Christ? The two go hand in hand.

If you’re driven to share your faith by any motivation other than love, then you’re running on the wrong fuel. Our mission is ultimately not to win arguments, to prove people wrong, to get them to do what we want them to do, or to join our church or cause. No, it’s to lovingly point them to the Savior so that they, too, can experience the love and forgiveness of our gracious God.

Are you sensing God's love in your life these days? Does it encourage you to share his love with others? If not, then let me urge you to make this a matter of prayer, asking him to expand your heart for him and for the people in your life. We can be confident he delights in answering prayers like that.

We Must Be Grounded in God's Truth

It might seem self-evident that we need to be rooted in the teachings of the Bible, but unfortunately that's no longer obvious to some people. More and more self-proclaimed Christians are talking about God and telling people what they think he wants for their lives, but they do so without stopping to consult his actual revelation to make sure they're telling people the right things about him.

For example, many are mistaken about biblical doctrines related to the deity of Christ, the person of the Holy Spirit, and salvation through Christ alone³—let alone the moral confusion that spreads through Christian circles about matters of sexuality and marriage. It seems that we are living in that time Paul warned us about, when people would no longer “put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear” (2 Timothy 4:3).

“But you,” Paul continues, “keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist . . .” (verse 5). In other words, don't succumb to their wishes, but keep holding to, living, and proclaiming the unadulterated teachings of Scripture.

May we never become the kind of people to whom Jesus must say, “Your mistake is that you don't know the Scriptures, and you don't know the power of God” (Mark 12:24 NLT). If you

want to serve the true God and make genuine disciples, then you must “do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

“Can the blind lead the blind?” Jesus asked his listeners. “Will they not both fall into a pit? The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher” (Luke 6:40).

If you want to lead others into the faith, then you must first make certain that the faith you’re leading them into is anchored in the clear and consistent doctrines of God’s Holy Word, the Bible.

We Must Communicate through Both Works and Words

Many believers think that if they just live an authentic Christian life, others will see it and be inexorably drawn to it. But that is, at best, a half-truth. It’s correct that our actions really matter, and they can be highly attractive to the people we hope to reach.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, for example, that we should let our “light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” But he also told us, as we saw earlier, that we need to go into the world and make disciples, “*teaching them . . .*” (Matthew 28:20, emphasis mine)—which inevitably involves *words*. He modeled this balance as he lived out his earthly ministry, serving people with his works but also teaching them with his words.

Add to this Paul’s challenge: “But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?” (Romans 10:14

NLT). I like to paraphrase Paul's point like this: "Your friends are never going to *see it*, unless you go to them and *say it*."

Good works can open hearts; grace-filled words can open minds. The Holy Spirit can use the two elements together to redeem lives for eternity.

Reaching People Is a Process

Those we hope to reach rarely move from spiritual doubt or disinterest all the way over to trust in Christ in one fell swoop. Instead, the journey usually happens over time. My former atheist friend, for example, took almost two years to carefully investigate the evidence for Christianity before becoming a follower of Jesus. One of my former Muslim friends took more than seven or eight years before he made the same decision. There are people in my life who I've been trying to reach for far longer but who don't seem to be spiritually open even now. Therefore, we need to be willing to walk with friends over the long haul as they consider Christ.

Remember that Jesus himself taught that those who were considering following him should first count the cost of becoming his disciple (Luke 14:25–35). In effect, he was urging them to slow down and make sure they knew what they were committing to before signing on with him—and that takes some time.

"But didn't Paul come to faith in Jesus almost instantaneously on the road to Damascus?" some will ask. "If so, why do you say it needs to be a process?"

Yes, he did—and I love it when God intervenes and fast-tracks someone's journey to faith. But that's not the norm. In fact, the example of Paul highlights why, for most people, coming to Christ is a longer process.

Many of the folks we're trying to reach today are much more

secular than the average seeker was in biblical times. Most people back then, like Paul, had a strong belief in the supernatural, so you didn't need to try to convince them that God was real, that there was an afterlife, or that they would be held accountable someday for how they lived. But today we often need to show people why these beliefs make sense—and this requires more time, energy, information, and patience.

Because of such differences in our culture today, I'd recommend that you anticipate this being a longer, step-by-step process. Then do all you can to try to facilitate that process by helping your friends stay on the path as they move toward Christ, until the exciting day when they finally put their trust in him.

Reaching People Is a Team Activity

It's intimidating to think that the process of someone coming to faith in Jesus is all dependent on you. Fortunately, that's almost *never* the case.

God had worked in Peggy's life in a variety of ways—through her summer in Yellowstone, a hotel Bible, several of her out-of-town friends, members of the Bible study group I was a part of, a church service the evening prior—all before I had the privilege of being used by him that night. That's how the Holy Spirit usually works: he wields a variety of resources to help people move toward Christ.

It was the same in Bible times. Paul illustrated this in 1 Corinthians 3:5–6: “What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.” See how the process works? We are simply instruments in God's skillful hands, contributing our own small voice to the symphony he's orchestrating.

My friend Cliffe Knechtle puts this divine partnership in perspective in this way:

A person's coming to Christ is like a chain with many links . . . There are many influences and conversations that precede a person's decision to convert to Christ. I know the joy of being the first link at times, a middle link usually, and occasionally the last link. God has not called me to only be the last link.⁴

It's encouraging to know that we can each play a unique role (or several roles) in the divine effort God is directing to bring people into his family. This relieves us of the unhealthy burden of thinking that someone else's relationship with God is all on our shoulders.

We just need to be prepared and available, and then "make the most of every opportunity" (Colossians 4:5) as God shows us open doors to spiritually encourage and speak to people for him. As each of us is faithful in doing our part, he will use us together as a team to communicate his purposes of grace and redemption.

Reaching People Is a Spiritual Activity

This final evangelism essential, which reminds us of the *spiritual* side of these efforts, brings us back to the first one. Because this is *God's* mission, we must recognize our need for God's help and lean on his guidance, wisdom, and power as we seek to reach our families and friends for him.

This doesn't diminish the importance of the assignments God gives us in this divine partnership, but it does spotlight the part that's easiest for us to forget. Namely, as Paul explains in Ephesians 6:12, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but

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against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

You see, helping people come to Christ is not just a matter of giving them good information or answers to their questions and objections. Neither is it just about being passionate or persuasive—though all of these can be important. It is, at bottom, a spiritual struggle that is being fought at an unseen level, and because of this we are *all* out of our league and need God’s wisdom, help, and intervention.

Ultimately it is the Holy Spirit who draws people into God’s loving arms. Therefore, we need to be as attuned to him and his workings as we possibly can be. This will come only through spending deep and consistent times with him in prayer, as well as regularly studying God’s Word, the Bible.

“If you remain in me and I in you,” Jesus promised in John 15:5, “you will bear much fruit.” And don’t miss his next phrase: “. . . apart from me you can do nothing.”

This shouldn’t surprise or discourage us; instead, it should drive us to our knees. It should cause us to humbly seek his help, his guidance, his power, and his blessing—for when we’re really and truly abiding in him and he in us, then we will “bear much fruit.” Pray frequently and fervently for the people in your life who need to know Christ. In so doing, you will activate divine forces and unseen activities that we can barely understand—but which will nevertheless impact eternity.

If praying for all the unbelievers in your life seems overwhelming, start by praying for just one friend who needs to know him (and if you don’t know any unbelievers, then *that’s* something to pray about). Begin asking God daily to work in that person’s

heart, opening their eyes to their need for him, drawing them to the salvation he offers, and providing opportunities for you to share your faith with them. Invite them to events, classes, group meetings, or church services where they'll hear more about the love and truth of Jesus and be given the opportunity to put their trust in him.

We Were Made to Live for So Much More

I hope this discussion has increased your excitement for spiritual impact. A life spent following Christ is a good thing, but one spent contagiously spreading the grace of Christ to others is an *extraordinary* thing.

There is nothing more rewarding than knowing that the God of the universe is loving through you, that he is speaking through you, that he is reaching through you, and that he is in the process of changing the lives of precious men, women, and children through your efforts to bring them to him.

We have a breathtaking opportunity in front of us—to share the life- and eternity-altering message of the gospel which, according to Romans 1:16, “is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.” Let's not take this lightly. Let's gear up and get prepared, because he is ready to use us in amazing ways.

What ways? you ask. Let me finish the story I started with.

Ripple Effects of a Contagious Faith

After having the incredible privilege of praying with Peggy to receive Christ on that wintry day so long ago, I was excited to see how she began to grow in her faith, and then share it with others.

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But not long after that she relocated to another part of the country, as did I—and we lost touch with each other. I hoped and prayed that she was staying steadfast in her walk with Christ, but I didn't really know.

I didn't get an update until several years later when I was back home for a high school class reunion and talked to one of our mutual friends. I was thrilled to find out that Peggy had married a Christian guy named Wayne—and together they had decided to join Wycliffe Bible Translators and move with their three young children to serve as full-time missionaries in a distant land.

Ironically, my friend who had once pilfered a Bible from a hotel room was now dedicating her life to taking the Scriptures to people on the other side of the globe who needed to hear them in their own language. Peggy and Wayne ended up serving in Papua New Guinea—the world's most linguistically diverse country, with more than 700 native dialects—for twenty-three years. They supported Bible translation work there, ministering to fellow missionaries and investing in the lives of missionary kids as well as Papua New Guineans. Then they returned to the United States to continue serving Wycliffe ministries from here, encouraging others to take God's Word to people all over the world.

But think about this. The God of the universe—who cares about people more than we'll ever be able to—used my nervous, stumbling early evangelistic efforts as part of a series of influences that led a young woman to Christ. Then she married a like-minded man and together they spent almost a quarter of a century sharing the gospel in one of the most remote places in the world, leading people to faith in Jesus and supporting the work of Bible translation so that other language groups could

know him as well. Their work continues to ripple through that nation and throughout the world.

And I got to be a small part of that!

And you know what? I'm guessing that someday in heaven, about 37,242 years from now, a sincere young Papua New Guinean might walk up to me (or maybe teleport over to me?), and say, "I just found out something about you, and I wanted to say thank you."

"That's nice," I'll say. "But for what?"

"I just discovered that you helped lead Wayne's wife Peggy to faith in Jesus. Well, Peggy was one of my teachers at Ukarumpa, and she had a big impact on me. Through my relationship with her and other caring missionaries, my entire family and I put our trust in Jesus. She was also a link in the chain of events that led me to become part of Bible translation efforts myself, and as a result even more of my people now know Jesus as Lord and Savior. So, I wanted to express my gratitude for the way you allowed the Holy Spirit to use you to help reach her."

Can you *imagine*?

Seriously, what could be more rewarding? What could be better? What could be more important? What could be more urgent? What else can we invest in that will last forever? In what other ways could small risks turn into changed lives, transformed families, and more and more people headed for eternity with God?

And that's just a foretaste of how God wants to use *you*.

"This is to my Father's glory," Jesus assured us in John 15:8, "that you bear much fruit . . ."



CHAPTER 2

FINDING AN APPROACH THAT FITS YOU

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

—1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-6

My wife Heidi and I had just arrived in England for an overseas summer ministry experience. We had lofty visions of what it would be like to bring the Good News to people in other parts of the world. But what we would actually be doing day by day was still a bit of a mystery. I asked one of the leaders how we would be spending our time.

“I’m glad you asked!” he said with exuberance. “We’re going to go all around the neighborhoods near the church, knock on doors, and tell people about Jesus!”

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“All day?” I asked, trying to hide my hesitancy.

“All summer! It’s gonna be great.”

Gulp.

Heidi and I had signed up for a summer tour of duty with a wonderful church in the heart of South London. It was filled with believers who had huge hearts for God and were highly motivated to reach out with his love to their neighbors. I was excited by the opportunity to introduce people to Jesus, but the prospect of knocking on strangers’ doors day after day was—well, daunting.

I did my best to reassure myself that this was going to be a good experience. *I love God and I love people*, I thought, *and tomorrow I get to go out and meet lots of nice British folks and introduce them to Jesus. This isn’t going to be so bad . . .*

By the next morning, my self-directed sermon was having at least some effect. I felt a slight twinge of excitement. But I was about to discover how hard this could be.

You might already suspect what we soon discovered: most British people weren’t huge fans of Americans, fresh out of Heathrow Airport, wandering through their neighborhoods and knocking on their doors to tell them about Jesus. Forget having tea and crumpets. We could barely get our foot in the door of most of the houses we called on.

“What do you want?” people would blurt out through their cautiously cracked-open doorways. We would explain we were visiting from the church around the corner and wondered if they’d be interested in talking about spiritual matters. “Oh, well, we’re part of a different parish—and we don’t have any questions,” they would say, closing the door quickly.

One lady even said to me in a mildly accusatory tone, “You have an *American* accent!”

Trying to stay upbeat, I replied, “Well, what a coincidence—we *are* Americans!”

“Then why don’t you go home,” she replied, “and pester people in your own country?”

Honestly, at the moment that sounded like a pretty good idea!

Tough Times at Trafalgar Square

Then things got even harder. After weeks of knocking on doors, our team captain announced that we’d be joining up with several other London churches and heading downtown to do some “open-air evangelism” in the central part of the city.

Again, I tried to keep a positive attitude. At least we’d be hitting some fresh territory.

The intent was good, but the strategy wasn’t adequately thought through. An advance team had set up a small sound system to amplify a local worship leader in hope that his music would attract and intrigue people. But in the land that spawned the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and Led Zeppelin, the musician’s guitar strumming didn’t stir up a lot of interest. More challenging yet, our outreach took place on the afternoon of the annual gay march—and their parade route just happened to go around our location in Trafalgar Square. The raucous atmosphere made discussing serious spiritual matters all the more difficult.

We did the best we could, but when we were finally done, I was really *DONE*. Done with cold calling. Done with knocking on doors. Done with approaching strangers.

Done with evangelism.

After eight weeks of such uphill efforts, my disenchantment followed me home. It wasn’t that I was suddenly against

evangelism—I was just convinced it wasn't for me. I resolved that in the future I'd serve God in other ways and leave outreach for the outreach types.

A New Discovery

A few weeks later, though, I heard a sermon that made me rethink my resolution.

The pastor challenged the idea that in order to share our faith we have to try to become something we're not, or to imitate the approach someone else is comfortable taking. He explained that God intentionally builds diversity into his church, and he delights to use people with different backgrounds, different cultures, different ethnicities, different spiritual gifts, and different approaches to sharing their faith—all in concert with each other and all to expand his body of believers here on earth.

As he continued the sermon, the pastor gave a number of examples from the New Testament to illustrate that even in the early church they didn't all do evangelism in the same way. He pointed to biblical figures such as Peter and Paul. They were both influential church leaders gifted in sharing the gospel, but they used vastly different approaches to do so.

Peter deployed his hard-hitting personality to present the gospel in direct ways. At times he was even confrontational. For instance, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter challenged his listeners with the truth about Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection, and then he confronted them with their need to "Repent and be baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). God powerfully used Peter's bold and unvarnished words as 3,000 people turned to Christ that day.

Then there was the apostle Paul, who used a more intellectual style to present the gospel. We see an example of his approach in Acts 17, where Paul stood up and spoke in the Areopagus in Athens, Greece, to address the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who, according to the passage, “spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas” (verse 21). It was a tough audience, but God used Paul’s reasoned approach to get through to some of those scholars who soon “became followers of Paul and believed” (verse 34).

These and several other early Christians were presented as examples who used approaches that were natural to them, and who applied those approaches according to the needs of the moment.

Finding Roles That Fit Us

This sermon had me rethinking those months of trying to reach out to strangers in London. Heidi and I had initially struggled to even get people to talk with us, let alone to discuss spiritual matters. But we noticed that, as we went from door to door (to door), people were more open to Heidi, at least initially, than they were to me. This wouldn’t surprise you if you knew her. She’s an outgoing “people person” who enjoys making new acquaintances and quickly engaging them in casual conversations.

Recognizing this, we soon decided that *she* would be the one who knocked on the doors. I’d hover behind my five-foot-tall wife until the door would fling wide, and then I’d rush in behind her.

The innovation paid off. Heidi had a natural ability to put people at ease and break the ice in initiating interactions that could then lead to fruitful spiritual discussions. We found

ourselves getting invited into homes more regularly, being served tea more frequently, and having meaningful conversations more consistently.

Heidi got us in the door, but when people would ask us a challenging theological question, then it would naturally become my turn. I disliked approaching strangers to try to engage them in serious discourse, but I loved addressing their spiritual questions and objections whenever these weightier matters came up.

That sermon, along with my reflections back on the lessons we'd learned through trial and error during our summer of ministry in London, helped me realize that my interest in giving evidence for Christianity was all about *evangelism*. I was motivated to clear the intellectual pathway for people in order to help them consider Christ and his offer of salvation.

For me, this realization was a revolution. I didn't need to write off evangelism in my own life—far from it! Rather, I needed to find ways to express it more naturally. I discovered that God knew what he was doing when he made me. He gave me my personality on purpose. He didn't create me to be someone who enjoyed walking up to strangers or knocking on doors to tell people about Jesus. Instead, God designed me to be someone who, like Paul, loves to interact with people about their beliefs, to address their questions and objections, and to help remove their intellectual roadblocks—all in order to open them up to the life-changing message of the gospel.

Discovering Your Natural Approach

I believe this information can become revolutionary for you as well.

FINDING AN APPROACH THAT FITS YOU

Maybe you've never tried sharing your faith in ways that don't fit you, like I did that summer in London. But you can at least imagine what it would feel like. Intuitively, none of us wants to be put on the spot or to face situations where we feel out of place or ill-equipped. And from my interactions with many Christians over the years, these kinds of images are what often come to their minds—real or imagined—when they think about getting involved in personal evangelism.

A related barrier we have to sharing our faith is the sense that we'll have to force ourselves to become something we're not, whether positive or negative. Our examples usually fall into one of two extremes.

On the positive side, we carry in our mind's eye a picture of evangelism that's based on highly effective pastors and teachers we've known, seen on stage, or watched on television or online. They are confident and articulate in talking about their faith. These people seem to know more than we do, are more accomplished than we are, or have skills that we don't have. We could never do what they do!

On the negative side, we harbor images of individuals who lack the skills to be effective and yet foist themselves on others just the same. They might be socially awkward, spiritually overbearing, or simply unable to clearly articulate what they're trying to explain. We don't want to be like them!

Do you see why these polar opposites put us off? We categorize evangelism as an activity for one of two kinds of Christ followers: Superstar Christians who have the skills needed to share the gospel effectively, or Offbeat Believers who lack those skills but do it anyway!

It's no wonder that many of us decide that outreach isn't

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for us. The vast majority of believers end up in “evangelistic no-man’s land,” thinking *somebody* ought to be spreading the Good News—but that somebody isn’t going to be *them*. Unfortunately, studies bear this out. A recent *LifeWay Research* publication reports, for example, that less than half of the churchgoers they surveyed (45 percent) had shared information on how to become a Christian with someone in the prior six months.¹

The good news about the Good News is that we can reverse those trends by learning to authentically be ourselves while sharing Jesus with others. There are a variety of natural approaches we can take to reach the people around us—things we can say and do that fit our own God-given personalities. Specifically, I think you’ll be encouraged by the five *Contagious Faith Styles* we’ll explore in the chapters that follow.

It’s liberating to realize that God knew what he was doing when he made you. *Your* personality is on purpose. You don’t need to feel bad for not looking, acting, or talking like some other Christian. God wants to use you *as you*—as he equips and stretches you to reach out to others in your own uniquely effective way.

In fact, he has designed all of us to be missionaries within our own circle of friends. Think about this: the reason they are your friends is because they relate to people like you. That’s right; friendship is voluntary. These people want to know you because you’re their kind of person. That means that nobody—not me, not your pastor, not the most persuasive evangelist on television or social media—can relate to them the way that you can.

No wonder Paul said, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:20). An effective ambassador is one who knows

the language and culture of the people to whom he or she is sent. Well, that's you—nobody knows your family and friends the way you do. Nobody speaks their language, or relates to their culture, or is connected to their past, like you.

You can be that spiritual ambassador. *You* can be a God-appointed missionary, sent at least initially to reach the people you know best. Now you just need to get prepared. You need to find your natural niche for spiritually influencing others. You'll also want to hone a few *Key Skills* on how to tell them about your faith. Those are the things we're going to spend the bulk of this book doing—together.

Are you ready to get started?

A Contagious Vision

For my part, I soon learned what you might already know: *God has a sense of humor!*

Why do I say that? Because less than a year after thinking I'd walked away from being involved in evangelism, I was hired to be the first director of evangelism at what was rapidly becoming one of the most-attended churches in the United States, an innovative and influential congregation in Chicago that a leading global missiologist declared to be the most evangelistic church in North America.

Ironically, I was thrust into the middle of an outwardly focused movement, leading the charge to find new strategies to equip Christians to tell others about Christ and to get the gospel to countless outsiders who needed to know the Savior. I found a fresh passion for reaching people in ways that fit my God-given personality. And I began developing a vision for helping other

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Christians find natural approaches to reaching people in their own lives, as well as helping them learn the skills they need to do so effectively.

As I stepped into my new role, I immediately began to write a training course designed to liberate the people in our own congregation. Along with my ministry partner and best buddy Lee Strobel (who would later pen *The Case for Christ* and many other bestselling books), I developed a pilot course that we taught month after month to new groups of people at the church, with the goal of helping every member share their faith effectively.

Then, after several years of refining those materials, we reshaped them so they could be used in other congregations and ministries around the world. When we finally published the training, we called it the *Becoming a Contagious Christian* course, and I coauthored a bestselling book by the same title.² The results astounded us over the years that followed. The course has been translated into more than twenty languages and has equipped nearly two million people around the world to share their faith in natural ways.

By God's grace, countless individuals have been reached through those who've been inspired and trained through these materials. I know men who were able to reach their wives, and women who reached their husbands and children. One close friend reached her dad soon before he died, and then she helped encourage and coach another woman who led both of her parents to Christ! There have been workers who have had a spiritual influence on their bosses. Many people's neighbors have been impacted for eternity. Students' lives have been transformed by the gospel. We've even seen a number of church attenders in our courses over the years come to realize that they'd never put their trust in Jesus

personally, and then make the decision to receive him right then and there. I thank God for the ways he has worked through all of this—especially considering how much of it initially flowed out of my own awkward and uncomfortable experiences.

Looking Forward

But I believe we're just getting started! I've taken what I've learned in the years since then—along with some of the classic wisdom of the original materials—and put it into the *Contagious Faith* book you're reading, as well as the new *Contagious Faith* video training course that flows out of it. We're also spreading the training through online classes offered through our Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics at Colorado Christian University. I hope you'll consider taking a class or two—or perhaps earning a certificate or an accredited undergraduate or master's degree—through this exciting new program.³

My sincere prayer is that this book will prepare you to share your faith in ways that really fit you—whether your main approach turns out to be the *Friendship-Building*, *Selfless-Serving*, *Story-Sharing*, *Reason-Giving*, or *Truth-Telling Contagious Faith Style*—or most likely a combination of several of them.

Also, I hope you'll consider using the *Contagious Faith* training course to deepen your own confidence in sharing Christ, and to help equip your small group, your class at church, or even your entire congregation with the approaches and skills needed to reach friends and family members with the gospel.

I believe that together we can discover new ways to approach evangelism, and then be unleashed to spiritually impact the lives of the people around us—for eternity.



THE FIVE CONTAGIOUS FAITH STYLES

In the next five chapters, we're going to explore the five *Contagious Faith Styles*. We'll look at current examples of each of them, people who used these approaches in the New Testament, and situations where Jesus himself employed each of the styles. Then we'll unpack *Key Skills* that will help you become increasingly effective at communicating your faith.

As you go through these chapters, you'll be able to identify which style most naturally fits you. But I encourage you to be sure to read all five chapters, even if you think you already know which of these is your primary approach.

Why? You might be surprised to find you relate well to several of the styles we discuss, and you'll want to draw from elements of each of those in a combination that best fits you. And even if a particular approach doesn't seem to fit you, you'll probably think of other believers in your circle who do match with it. This can help you know how to best partner with them to reach your family and friends, as well as theirs.

THE FIVE CONTAGIOUS FAITH STYLES

Additionally, the *Key Skills* listed in the second part of each of these five chapters are essential for *all* of us—regardless of which style is our main one.

Now, you might be thinking that we should be less concerned about our own approach and much more about what the other person needs from us. And there's some truth in that. Paul did say that we need to “become all things to all people,” so that by all possible means we might reach some of them with the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:19–23).

So, yes, we need to flex as much as possible to relate to people we're trying to reach. But that doesn't negate the fact that we still have certain personal parameters within which we'll generally be most effective. In other words, there will be certain people and situations we're better suited for than others. Once we understand what those are, we'll be wise to try to operate in those arenas as much as possible. And when we need to stretch beyond them, we may want to supplement our own efforts with those of another Christian whose natural style is better suited to the specific needs at hand.

It's much like the topic of spiritual gifts. While we should be ready and willing to serve wherever God leads us, we'll usually be most fruitful—and more fulfilled—when we're serving in areas that fit our natural, God-given areas of giftedness. And because the Holy Spirit knows this (and designed it that way), he'll most often lead us to serve in ways that are consistent with who he made us to be.

One last preliminary. It was the discovery of which styles were *not* mine, as well as which one *is*, that liberated me to get back on the playing field in reaching others for Christ. Finding your own natural approach will likely be liberating for you as

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well—but so will understanding various styles that don't particularly reflect your personality.

So, read on with an open heart and a prayerful attitude, asking God to show you which approaches will best fit you as well as the people he's calling you to reach.