

Contagious Christianity

Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Worship

Introduction:

In **Luke 19:10**, Jesus explained His mission, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.” He lived, He died, He was resurrected in order to accomplish this mission. Then He established His church to carry on this work. It stands to reason then that we must be busy seeking and saving the lost. We must be impacting the world with the gospel message of salvation. How are we doing with that goal? Have we accomplished it yet? I believe we can all agree that we still have a lot of work to do to seek and save the lost. But how can we have the Maximum Impact with the gospel. We live in a day of mass marketing. We can put ads and shows on the radio and TV. We can rent billboards. We can do mass mail outs. But were you aware that even today with all of these advertisement avenues, the number one means by which anything gets spread, even the gospel, is by individual word of mouth? That is exactly what works with Christ’s gospel. Understanding that the great weight of spreading the gospel is on our shoulders as individual Christians, how can we impact our society? I would like to share a formula with you for having the Maximum Impact with the gospel. Regrettably, I did not come up with this formula, I read it in a book by Bill Hybels entitled, “Becoming A Contagious Christian.” While I do not agree with Mr. Hybels’ theology or plan of salvation, I do believe he has grasped the keys to evangelism in a way that has sometimes eluded us. His formula:

$$HP + CP + CC = MI$$

That is, High Potency plus Close Proximity plus Clear Communication equals Maximum Impact.

Discussion:

I. HP = High Potency

- A. Jesus said we are the salt of the world in **Matthew 5:13**. But this salt is supposed to have taste. In fact, Jesus asked, “If the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again?” We have to be potent salt. According to **Romans 12:2**, we are supposed to be different from the world. That is the exact essence of having high potency. We ought to stand out. People ought to be able to look at us and tell that we have something they are missing.
- B. No, this does not mean we become “Jesus Freaks,” “Bible Thumpers” or “Radical Christians.” Rather, as a marquee I saw recently explains, “God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts.” While clearly obeying God’s word is going to offend some people no matter how diplomatic we are about it, God does not want us to live our Christianity in offensive ways. But He does want us to stand out. How? That marquee explained it. God wants us to bear spiritual fruit.
- C. **Galatians 5:22-23** describes the fruit of the Spirit. When we are bearing these fruit, we will stand out properly. We must bear love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Can you imagine what kind of impact we would have on people in the world if they really saw these attributes in us? How do you think it would impact people if they saw our goal was to love instead of seeking our own? How do you think it would impact people if they saw us maintaining joy throughout the stresses of life? How do you think it would impact people if they saw us grounded with peace in the midst of turmoil, controversy and emotional upheaval? How would it impact people if they saw patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control from us? Would we stand out as different then? You had better believe it.

II. CP = Close Proximity

- A. Salt can have all kinds of savor, flavor and potency, but if it stays in the salt shaker, it will not do any good. Salt has to touch the food for it to have any impact. The same is true for our spiritual fruit. We can bear all the spiritual fruit we want, but if it is locked up here in a church building or in our homes, it will never have any impact. The only way we can have any impact on those who are not saved is to be near them.
- B. That is exactly how Jesus lived. How often did He get in trouble for being with the wrong crowd?
 1. In **Luke 5:30**, the scribes and Pharisees asked, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus responded, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” We cannot get sinners to repent if we spend all our time with the righteous.
 2. In **Luke 15:2**, the scribes and Pharisees again complained, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” Jesus responded with the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the

lost son. His point was that people are lost and need to be found. The scribes and Pharisees should have been rejoicing that God was looking for sinners to save.

- C. No, this does not justify Christians involved in sinful activities claiming they are just trying to get close to the sinners. Nor does it mean Christians' best friends should be among the worldly. We must certainly be careful, bad company corrupts good morals (**I Corinthians 15:33**). But perhaps at times we have taken this verse too far. We are so worried that we might be considered guilty by association that we never contact the very people we claim we want to save. We must follow in the footsteps of our Savior. According to **Matthew 11:19**, Jesus was accused of some pretty awful things because of those with whom He spent time. However, He understood that in time, wisdom would vindicate Him.
- D. Remember, Jesus was seeking the lost (**Luke 19:10**). And so are we. We cannot seek the lost by always spending our time with the saved.

III. CC = Clear Communication

- A. The final key to our formula is clear communication. We can have all the spiritual fruit in the world and we can spend all of our time around those who need to see it, but if we never actually communicate the Gospel message to others, they will have no idea how to get what we have and be what we are.
- B. Every case of conversion recorded in scripture was preceded by teaching. In **Romans 10:13-15**, Paul demonstrated that the only way to get people to call on the name of the Lord and be saved is to teach them. There is no other way. While we may somewhat facetiously speak of contagious Christianity, we have to understand that salvation is not something that can be caught simply by hanging out with people who already have it. Salvation can only come by obeying the teaching of Christ (**Romans 6:17**).
- C. What does that mean for us? That means we each need to consider how we would clearly communicate the gospel to others. There is no set mold for how you approach this. But you do need to consider how you would do it. You can provide tapes, articles or sermon outlines to teach people. You could tell people about what you have done to obey the scriptures and how it has helped you. You can have a one-on-one Bible study with lessons that you have written or lessons that someone else has written. You can have a group study in your home that gives people opportunity to learn. You can write down a list of verses to go through with someone.
- D. The issue is not so much how you clearly communicate the gospel to someone. The point is that you do clearly communicate the gospel to them somehow. Make it fit you. You do not have to be like me. You do not have to take my approaches or anyone else's approach. But you do have to figure out how you are going to clearly communicate the gospel.

IV. It takes all three: HP + CP + CC = MI

- A. We cannot take shortcuts. If we are going to spread the gospel with Maximum Impact, we have to have all three keys, High Potency, Close Proximity and Clear Communication.
- B. If we leave out Clear Communication, people will long to be what we are but will never learn how. No one can call on the name of the Lord unless they are first taught (**Romans 10:13-15**).
- C. If we leave out Close Proximity, the necessary people will never see the Gospel lived or hear it taught properly. Even Jesus had to spend time with sinners to get them to repent (**Luke 5:32**).
- D. If we leave out High Potency, we will not be any different from the world and will not be saved ourselves. Additionally, those who hear our teaching will have no reason to believe that what we say can help them at all. After all, we are no different from them. Our light must not be put under a basket but set out on a lamp stand (**Matthew 5:15**).
- E. When all three are present, we can have Maximum Impact with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That does not mean everyone will be saved. It simply means we will be doing our job. We will be planting and watering the seeds, we must leave the increase up to God (**I Corinthians 3:6-7**).

Conclusion:

We can impact Franklin and the Middle Tennessee area. We will impact Franklin and the Middle Tennessee area. We must simply work at it. Are you willing to work?