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E-newsletter

MAKING FAITH CONTAGIOUS!

If, indeed, “faith is caught more than it is taught,” have I wasted a lifetime, trying to “teach” the faith? No, but faith is caught before it can be taught, so how can we make it contagious in home and congregation? Here are some strategies for all of us to use.

BE INVITING, BE WELCOMING, BE INCLUSIVE

Recent research reveals that the first step to making disciples of Jesus Christ is to give them a sense of belonging. Personal invitation is far more effective than the broadcast invitation, intended for everyone. Call them by name. Invite. Invite again. Include them. Connect them with others. Let them know that they are welcome. Let them know how important it is to you that they join you, whether in worship, an event in your congregation, or dinner at your table.

BE A ROLE MODEL

The single most powerful thing that any of us can do is to show what a life of faith looks like, teaching them by our example how to behave as a follower of Jesus Christ. Doesn't it call all of us to be our very best selves, when others are watching? Kids have an amazing hypocrisy detector. My mother said, “Do as I say, not as I do.” Didn't work for me ... or my kids or my grandkids. Living a life consistent with the values we verbally espouse is a challenge for all of us ... and a powerful predictor of how credible we will be in the lives of children, youth, and other adults who are watching.

BE JOYFUL

Want others to follow? Make it look like fun, like a joyous way to live your life. This doesn't mean you have to be sappy happy, but let the deep joy of being named and claimed by Jesus, of being loved beyond all reason by this God, of following Jesus be written large on your face, in your body language, in your enthusiasm for life. Then, seed this joy to others, helping them experience what gives you life, and that abundantly.

CATCH OTHERS BEING FAITHFUL AND FAITH-FILLED

Hold up a mirror to the lives of others and name the presence of Jesus, the witness to Jesus that you see in them. When you see an act of kindness, selflessness, integrity, compassion, and moral courage, let them know. Name it as faithful. Let them know that their lives are a witness to what they believe.

BECOME A TRIPLE-A CHRISTIAN ADULT

Be **authentic** in your faith - share your imperfections, your wonderings, your wanderings, and your deep love for Jesus. We are not perfect people; we are beloved and forgiven. Be **available** to others - practice being fully present, in deep listening and attentiveness to another. This does not mean that you have extra time. It means that you choose to invest it in others. And be **affirming** of each one as a child of God - each person is created in God's image, so you can affirm their personhood, even when you have to correct or dislike their behavior. Personhood cannot be changed; behavior can.