

Making Your Faith Go Viral

How God is doing big things through seemingly small means

Four hours. That's all it took for Army cook Albert Gitchell's symptoms to show up in dozens of others at Camp Funston in Fort Riley, Kan. The mess sergeant awoke shortly before breakfast with a 103-degree fever, burning throat, aching muscles and throbbing head. Minutes after he reported to the camp hospital, another soldier walked in with the same ailments. Then another, and another.

Before noon that day, 107 others would be stricken with this mysterious illness. By the week's end, 522 men would catch it. And within a mere eight months, it would kill a staggering 20 *million* people worldwide. By the end of its brief yet devastating run the 1918 Influenza Pandemic—the "Spanish Flu" pandemic—would affect more than one in four people living on the planet, killing anywhere between 30 to 100 million.

Not every virus hits such massive global proportions, but inherent to its very definition is the ability to spread like wildfire almost instantly. Today we use the word *viral* to describe everything from a YouTube hit to a tweet to a Trojan worm to a marketing sensation. Long before Charlie bit anyone's finger, however, Jesus created the first truly "viral" campaign. And like any virus, it started small and seemingly insignificant.

For Peter, Andrew, James and John, it began on smelly fishing boats. For Matthew, it was at his tax office. For Zacchaeus, it was in a sycamore tree in Jericho. And for the rich young ruler mentioned in the Gospels, it was out on a dusty road. Each of these men heard a simple, viral message: "Follow Me."

Like an infectious agent implanted deep inside, the call gripped their hearts and quickly took over. Some, like the wealthy young man, couldn't bear the hold and ran the other way for fear of being consumed. Others, like the 12 handpicked

by Jesus, became the core group of contagious carriers. And through only a handful of men, God's viral plan to save His world took action.

Fast-forward 2,000 years and almost a third of the earth claims to be carriers of this glorious virus. Even more have been exposed to it. Whether those who've interacted with the Jesus virus are as contagious as His original strand is another issue; the point is that what began incredibly small—microscopic by comparison—grew to something as massive as the current billion on the planet who profess to be followers of Christ.

Clearly, God is doing big things, just as He always has. But we often forget—especially in America where we believe bigger is always better—that God's version of *big* isn't always what we think it should look like.

Ask those in the house church movement like Ross Rohde and Felicity Dale, both of whom write for us in this issue. They'll tell you that small is actually becoming huge as simple/organic churches reproduce exponentially both globally and, more recently, in the U.S.

Or, on the flip side, read about Victory Church in the Philippines, a megachurch that dwarfs most of our nation's largest churches yet is based on the seemingly "small" principle of one-one-one discipleship.

In both micro and macro settings, God is speaking—dare I say shouting?—to His church today, reminding us that regardless of the size of our gatherings, the call and goal remain the same: "Follow Me."

You and I are part of this spreading virus. We were meant to be contagious, and the closer we follow Jesus, the more "deadly" our virus becomes (certainly to the flesh).

Working on this issue forced me to ask some tough questions,

and I hope it does the same for you: Just how viral is my faith? Is what I carry inside so uncontaminated that non-carriers see me and wish they had “it”? Am I such a disciple of Jesus that I look, walk, talk, smell, sound and think like Him? Do I allow the Holy Spirit in me to come pouring out upon contact with others?

God is reinjecting viral faith throughout His church today. I pray it spreads wildly to and through you.

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