

Begin with the Fragrance of Jesus

... Are you a leader? Do you influence someone? What would it take to turn that relationship into spiritual leadership?

Second Corinthians 2:14-16 says,

But thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and who makes known through us the fragrance that consists of the knowledge of him in every place. For we are a sweet aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing—to the latter an odor from death to death, but to the former a fragrance from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?

Intentionally or unintentionally, we are steering others spiritually, either toward Christ or away from him. Wherever we go, we, hopefully, leave behind his scent, thus opening up opportunities for us to draw people toward God's vision. The fragrance of Christ comes through our words, actions, and attitudes. Paul says that some are drawn to the fragrance while others are repelled by it. When we verbally communicate God's vision to those who enjoy the aroma so that they embrace it as their own, we lead them spiritually. The opportunity is there with our children, friends, co-workers, and extended families because our influence pervades every relationship that we have.

Leadership expert John Maxwell concurs, "The true measure of leadership is influence—nothing more, nothing less."

What turns a relationship of influence into spiritual leadership? My answer is intentional spiritual communication. Once we determine to cast a vision for God's best and someone responds, we are guiding spiritually. We may begin by sharing our lives so that others whiff a trace of Jesus; eventually, however, we speak about our faith. The vision we cast may depict a need to follow Jesus for the friend seeking answers; it may paint a portrait of increased dependency on Christ for the struggling believer; or it may explain the future promise of bodily resurrection for someone with chronic illness. That's when the fragrance of Christ mixes with the fragrance of leadership, with or without the name.