

Subversive Jesus Needs You!

1. Warm up: Jeff about being on a rollercoaster for the first time as a kid. As the coaster reached the top of the first great incline, he found himself wondering, “What am I doing here? What was I thinking?” Tell us about a time when you’ve had that same feeling.
2. Given all that goes on in churches (and any community of people), we may sometimes find ourselves wondering why we should even bother with church. On top of that, many churches have a reputation for being stanch defenders of the status quo – people who always want to turn back the clock. Many churches are bastions of judgmentalism and personal moral superiority, merciless finger pointers, filled with angry, aggrieved me-first, America-first people focused on personal prosperity instead of compassion and service. Many churches become empires led by pastors who own personal jets and sport thousand-dollar tennis shoes, promising God’s blessings in exchange for our money. And we find ourselves thinking, “Why would I want to be part of something like that?”
 - a. Taken as a whole, do you think churches in American have a good reputation? Why or why not? What do you think the average unchurched person in American would say is their biggest criticism of churches today?
 - b. How do you think things got so bad? And how do you think that makes Jesus feel? Describe the emotions you think he feels seeing what’s happening.
 - c. Tell us about somebody you know who walked away from church? What prompted that?
3. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, “I will build my church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.” In I Corinthians 12:27, Paul compared church to “the body of Christ” and said, “You are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” In other words, we are called not just to be in church, but to be church. But when we hear the word “church” with our modern ears, it can leave us cold, given the negative reputation of so many churches. On Sunday, Jeff reminded us that churches in the first century had a very different reputation. The New Testament Greek word for church simply means “assembly.” An assembly is a group of people who come together for a common purpose. Our common purpose, Paul reminds us, is to be “the body of Christ.”
 - a. How would you explain to someone what it means for a church to be “the body of Christ?”
 - b. Can individual believers acting in isolation (separate from any church) be “the body of Christ?” Why or why not?
 - c. Read a portion of the famous poem written by St. Teresa of Avila excerpted on p. 3, then come back to this question. Being the body of Christ means we’re supposed to keep doing what Jesus did. In Luke 12:49, Jesus said, “I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! . . . Do not think I have come to bring peace to earth, but rather division! From now on five in one

household will be divided, two against three.” What’s Jesus trying to say here? How would you explain the meaning of that verse to someone?

- d. Jeff went through a litany of ways Jesus was burning down the “old ways” and boldly advocating for the new by his treatment of women, children, people of other races, and those who were poor, hungry, or sick. He taught salvation by grace instead of by merit. And in all this, he challenged institutional religion in his day to its very core. Basically, he was turning everything upside down. How does that make you feel about Jesus? Do you want to be part of a Jesus Movement in the world today that looks like that? Why or why not?
 - e. Jeff said, “Subversive Jesus needs subversive churches that are willing to stand up and fight to reclaim and redeem the Jesus Movement. We, this congregation, have been raised up to be one of those churches.” How do you feel about that? Does it feel like we’re living into that calling? Why or why not?
4. Paul tells us that, for the Jesus Movement to thrive, each believer has to be a critical functioning part of the body of Christ, i.e., the church. And because of that, he says, the Holy Spirit equips each believer with one or more supernatural “Spiritual Gifts” meant to supercharge our ability to powerfully contribute to the Jesus Movement. Read the excerpts from I Corinthians 12:1-27 printed on p. 3.
- a. Examples of the types of Spiritual Gifts mentioned in the New Testament include mercy, hospitality, faith, healing, prophecy, teaching, leading, serving, wisdom, etc. Of course, we’re all supposed to show mercy, we’re all supposed to have faith, etc. So how would you define Spiritual Gifts? What distinguishes someone with the Spiritual Gift of mercy from a believer who just shows ordinary mercy?
 - b. Do you believe that you personally have one or more Spiritual Gifts? Why or why not? Tell us one of your Spiritual Gifts and how you use it.
 - c. Jeff said, “You will know when you’re operating in an area of spiritual giftedness when you do something for God that: (a) fills you with energy instead of draining you; and (b) blesses the socks off of the people around you.” Tell us about a time when you’ve done something for God that checked both of those boxes.
 - d. Paul emphasizes that all Spiritual Gifts are of equal dignity. In fact, if anything, he suggests that the behind-the-scenes gifts may deserve greater honor than the more-glitzy public-facing gifts – because no movement can thrive without lots of people working faithfully behind the scenes. In fact, what we do for the Jesus Movement through LifeJourney Church may be some of the most significant work we’ll ever do in our lives, as we strive together to call the church universal back to its authentic roots in Jesus, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, breaking down walls that divide humanity, and helping people find spiritual life in Jesus. When you stand before Jesus at the end of your days, what’s some specific form of gifted service you want to be able to tell Jesus you did to further his beautiful Movement?

St. Teresa of Avila

Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Christ has no body now but yours.

I Corinthians 12:1-27, selected verses

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ⁴ There are varieties of gifts, ⁶ but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹⁴ Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²² On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.