

SACRILEGE: A Study Guide

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INTRODUCTION: Seeing Jesus through the Keyhole

Hello Friends,

If you're walking with us through this *Sacrilege* study guide, I'm assuming you're grabbing a few friends to go with through this. As we said in the book, *Sacrilege* is about seeing Jesus without all the preconceived notions; it's about knowing Jesus without all the rules; and most importantly, it's about following Jesus without all the religion—maybe without any religion.

As we get started, I want to take you back to my first illustration: when I was trying to find Jesus in the Holy Land . . . and failed. As I walked the streets of the Old City, I was constantly distracted by all the church buildings and worship ceremonies going on simultaneously around me. I was amazed at how many different church traditions had staked their claim by erecting huge buildings and monuments to Jesus, and like a pesky cloud of gnats that buzz and flutter around your eyes and nose, the vending and sales paraphernalia about Jesus was annoying to say the least. Above these huge distractions, the most troublesome thing that hindered me from finding authentic images of Christ was all the Jesus followers who were clamoring for their place in line or simply cutting me off or stepping on my toes.

It just got really hard to find any traces of the real Jesus—the real story.

Most of us have been distracted or disoriented and therefore have bought into some distortions of true faith and followership after Jesus. We may even have perpetuated the problem by passing on our false images of Christianity to friends and family around us.

So the best place to begin is to assess where our view of Jesus has come from. Using my own list of hindrances (buildings, traditions, worship styles, other Christians), try to piece together a small story about your faith. Use these questions to help.

1. If someone who never knew anything about Christianity lived with you while you grew up and watched you live, worship, and follow Jesus, and then they had to describe what a Christian is based on the image you gave them, what might they conclude?
2. If someone, maybe even one of your children, was to describe Christianity based on what they'd seen in your faith over the last five years, what might they say or conclude? What is Christianity according to your life?
3. Are there any pictures of Jesus you grew up with that may not represent the real story or real Jesus? Try to describe in detail some negative experiences or paradigms that might have blocked a clear vision of Christ for you.
4. Where do you think you picked up some positive or accurate Jesus images in your past?
5. Extra Credit: Just as I wrote a short letter to my daughters to try to explain a little of my faith story, consider writing a letter to your own children or friends to help them see the Jesus you have found. We will revisit this later in the study guide, but try to get started if you can.

CHAPTER 1: Sacrilegious Jesus: Breaking Images for the First and Last Time

Change is always hard. Whether you're changing homes and moving to a new city or neighborhood, changing jobs, or changing diapers on your little scuttlebutt, no one likes to reconsider, rethink, or reorient. Historically, the thing that people have the hardest time adjusting is religious beliefs. Sort of funny but also kind of sad is the reality that most church splits happen based on how we "sing to God." The issue of whether or not to sing hymns or contemporary songs just freaks people out. While in St. Andrews, Scotland, a few years back, I ran across a iron plaque hanging on an old iron gate. The inscription told a story of young Patrick Hamilton, a twenty-four-year-old student who began teaching Lutheran doctrine and was killed for his crazy theology. His death sparked the Reformation in Scotland and once again illustrates how confident people can get over their tradition and theological paradigms.

Clearly, as Jesus walked among the religious and spiritually disoriented, he broke images and ideals. He broke Sabbath rules and social norms that were tied to religious beliefs and even abolished the law of Moses (Ten Commandments) and church-based spirituality. According to Jesus, you don't need the temple anymore, or the priests, and later Paul even taught that the Sabbath is open for discussion.

Consider these questions:

1. Think back to the denominational background your faith came from. Google the doctrinal statements and compare the distinctive beliefs. Also share about the unspoken or spoken rules that you grew up under that were tied to God.
2. Picture Jesus coming into your belief system and way of practicing your Christianity. What behaviors or beliefs do you think he might make some adjustments to?
3. Here's a list of crazy things Jesus said or did. Circle the ones you would have had a problem with. Why?

Granting forgiveness to people who weren't asking to be converted

Letting a prostitute touch his body with oil

Protecting a hussy caught in the act of adultery

Making 500 gallons of wine for people who were already hammered

Inviting little kids into a adult Bible study

Eating dinner with skuzzy IRS agent

Constantly hanging with the disgustingly sick

Dropping a curse word during a sermon

Calling conservative pastors "fakes," "vipers," and "hypocrites"

Suggesting to a young man to follow him instead of going to his father's own wedding

Calling a man to sell all his stuff and give to the poor

4. Now make a list of some topics you think will be really important for Jesus to speak into for you, your family, and friends. Consider working through these over the next year together, and make sure you look at the issues from different angles. Here's a few to prime the pump:

- How we should treat homosexuals?
- Should we let our kids date non-Christian kids?
- What types of neighborhoods should we seek to raise our kids in?
- Is it okay to have a few beers with a friend?
- What do we do if our kids want to get tattoos?
- Should we make our kids go to church when they're in middle school and high school?

- Should we give our money to the church or give to people with actual needs?
- Would Jesus rather we be in church every Sunday or occasionally use the day to help folks out or throw a party for people who don't go to church?

CHAPTER 2: Why Jesus Doesn't Want Any More Followers: From Disciple to Apprentice

Although the title of this chapter may seem a bit shocking, all I am suggesting is that Jesus wants people to practice his way of life instead of just talking about it. He desires for people to take the kingdom more seriously than just church attendance, and that means to really grow in our relationship with Christ, we must literally follow him.

We also introduced the word "apprentice" to be the more literal definition of Jesus's concept of "discipleship." So a good place to take this conversation further might be to start by remembering back to any times in your life when you were actually apprenticed in something. Consider these questions about apprenticeship:

1. What was the skill, trade, or focus of your apprenticeship environments? In other words, when the apprenticeship was over, what were you supposed to be able to do?
2. What aspects of the apprenticeship did you like, and which aspects were difficult for you?
3. Did the apprenticeship cost you anything, or did you get paid for doing it? How did the cost or lack of cost affect your devotion to the learning environment? What might that teach us about the cost of discipleship according to Jesus?
4. The things listed below are all part and parcel of any good apprenticeship. Pick one or two that you feel would be the most difficult for you. Then discuss what this might say about why it's difficult for you to become an apprentice of Jesus.

confrontation	character tests	dealing with people you normally don't associate with
drawing away from traditions	making commitment to the program more important than family time	being put in dangerous situations
not being paid	being asked to do uncomfortable tasks	leaving parts of your life that were really important to you
being scolded	being left on your own without the lead apprentice nearby	being given leadership over other potential apprentices

5. How long were you in your most significant apprenticeship environments? How long did it take for the disciples or first apprentices to "get it"? What does that say about how Jesus will apprentice us?

CHAPTER 3: Interlude into a New World: Seeing Jesus in 3-D

The Beatitudes were a paradigm-changing teaching that really shook how those who listened saw the world. They continue to be a game-changing teaching when we take the religion out of them and actually look at what Jesus was communicating. Jesus was painting a picture of the kingdom before people saw

it with their own eyes. The teaching was new and made people go cross-eyed. When we stop and take the glasses of religion off the pretty-sounding speech from a weak, personality-less Jesus, we too may get jacked!

1. Have you ever watched a movie, read a book or had a conversation that changed your perspective so much so that you chose to live differently as a result? Share your story with those present.
2. What was it that motivated that change in you?
3. In the late 1990s there was a fad which I never quite jumped on the bandwagon of. There were these pictures which were paintings of one thing, but if you got cross-eyed, stared really hard, stood on your head, and said the magic words, a 3-D picture would emerge from the painting that literally had nothing to do with the painting itself. The one looking at the picture was pretty hot stuff if they saw the “real” picture in the picture. This is really what Jesus was doing. He was speaking of the familiar in a way that was new and different and changed everything. Take a moment to write what you think is the gist of the Beatitudes.
4. Now read through the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1–11. Write them out in your own words. But wait! There are a couple of rules: (1) you can’t use the words *happy* or *blessed*, and (2) try to use language you’d use in a conversation at work rather than your Sunday school class.
5. Share what you wrote with a few friends. What stood out to you? Were your interpretations similar?
6. Like trying to see that picture within a picture, what do you think was hard for those listening? Would anything have been shocking, perplexing, or perhaps sacrilegious?
7. As you read through the book, mark those things that are shocking to you in some way. Maybe a highlight them, write them in your journal, or circle them, but do keep track. Collect your thoughts as you go, and each time you gather with your friends, share those things that just may just change the way you think, live, or relate to Jesus or people.

CHAPTER 4: Open Your Mind, Enter the Kingdom: Becoming an Unbiased Learner

It is no surprise that the first “blessing” in the Beatitudes signals where Jesus wants us all to begin. He wants his followers and apprentices to start over, to humble themselves and become learners. He wants us to become like children, wide-eyed and curious, in order to enter this new kingdom mentality and all it holds for us. Being a learner is a total body experience.

To be poor in spirit is to admit you don’t have it all together, you don’t know everything, and you have a thirst to learn and to not only know with the mind but also experience with actions. It means to be like a child as they learn to ride their bike, try to walk for the first time, or go to their first day of kindergarten.

1. To be like a child is to have a new perspective, to start over, to start fresh, and to be ready to soak in information and experience. Choose a skill you possess that you had to learn. Talk about the process of learning. Did it come instantly? Did you ever mess up? Were there any blatant failures? How did you know you were learning?
2. In your more successful learning endeavors, what were the commonalities?
3. Have you ever walked with someone as they were learning? What did you observe from that process?
4. Make a list of things you want to know how to do or people you want to know. Describe what you need to accomplish these things.
5. What keeps you from knowing how or knowing the person? Is it pride? Fear? Apathy? Lack of belief? Take some time to talk about these things.

6. Now read these thoughts from Jesus and John. (Be sure to read these with sacrilegious eyes, as we've muddled up their meaning too over time.) "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. Whoever says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did" (1 John 2:3-6 NIV). Again, what is the evidence of knowledge and relationship with Jesus? Talk about knowing and obedience for a bit.
7. Let's face it: life, pride, fear, personal history, apathy, you name it—there are many reasons we are not poor in spirit. There are many reasons we do not want to learn by knowledge or practice. What gets in the way of you being a learner of Jesus? What keeps you from being poor in spirit?

CHAPTER 5: The Problem with Family Values: Why Jesus Will Ask You to Open Your Home

Solomon understood something unique about mourning: "It is better to go to a house of mourning than go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart. Frustration is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart" (Eccles. 7:2 NIV). Mourning is a part of the human experience. We each have walked through seasons of grief or walked with others in their season. Sorrow, mourning, and grief are words most of us would like to avoid and concepts which we'd like to remove from life's experiences. But it is within mourning that we are deepened, and it is within the mourning of our friends and neighbors that we get the honor of being present with them. Henri Nouwen wrote, "When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares" (*The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey*).

It is in opening our homes and our lives to the lives of others that we get to live in the truth of the Beatitude, "Blessed are those who mourn" (Matt. 5:4 NIV). Mourning is no longer something to be avoided and our home can become a refuge and a place of healing, as long as we open the door.

1. Imagine with me for just a bit that there is 24 hours a day, 365 days a year surveillance of your home. Each of your coming and goings, meals, talks on the couch or the back deck—everything was filmed. You watch the surveillance footage and see a story unfold. What would be the story of your home? Here are a few ideas to prime the pump:

Loneliness	Entertainment	Avoidance
Keep to yourself	Anger	No one comes in uninvited
Self-focused	Others-focused	Laughter
Generous	Sports driven	Activity driven
Performance driven	Open	Closed
Empty	Thriving	TV
Fortress	Clean	Moral
Refuge for your family	Place of hiding	Talking
Welcome	Escape	

2. How has home been defined in your religious history? What about the values of the culture that influences how you define home? With this in mind, write a purpose statement for your home and its set of values.
3. From where did your ideas of home come? How were they formed? Who was most influential in your understanding of home?
4. Have you experienced a season of grief? Did anyone enter into that space with you? Was there anyone who practiced being present with you? Describe him or her. Share a story of a season of grief and how people around you dealt with your grief.
5. How do home and grief collide? For a little insight read this segment of Romans 12:9–15 (NIV): “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”
6. If Jesus came to live in your home, how might he change the atmosphere and the daily rhythms of life?
7. Create a vision for your home. If you have roommates or a spouse or kids, include them in the process. For extra credit, create something to remind you of this vision. Have a little show and tell with friends who are also wanting to apprentice with Jesus.

CHAPTER 6: The Art of Subtle Wooing: Winning the World through Meekness

God doesn’t want us to stick up for him, confound the unchurched with our right doctrine, or belittle them with attempts to be morally superior. Jesus is teaching us to stop trying to convert people and begin wooing them to his kingdom way of life through the meekness of our way. Meekness will cause us to be dignified and in turn dignify the spiritual journeys of others. Meekness will compel us to respect others, listen to them, and acknowledge the things that should turn them off about Christians, especially if they’ve had a few run-ins with fundies. Meekness by its very nature communicates to people an authentic belief that we aren’t any better than they are—really!—and that we only know what we know and have changed because God pursued us, saved us, helped us, and loved us.

Jesus in his meekness was not afraid to speak truth, but he spoke truth and love in the very same breath. When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, he restored her dignity before he spoke into her life. Just by speaking with her, Jesus told her that her life mattered. He then, through a series of questions, guided her to uncover the truth of her story, and in that moment his meekness led her to be (metaphorically speaking) naked and unashamed. His way, his love, and his truth led her to the truth that changed everything for her. She who once hid in shame was exposed and loved, and it caused her to run into the middle of the streets from which she had once hidden to share the Good News. Meekness is the scent of Jesus that allures people to know him more.

1. What image immediately comes to mind when you hear the word *evangelism*?
2. For kicks, google *evangelism* and see what comes up. You’ll find quite the variety. What way of bringing people to Jesus were you taught (if you were taught such a thing)?
3. Have you ever had someone try to save you? Tell the story.
4. Make a list of practices that are a must for appropriate evangelism in your understanding.

5. Here's a list of ways Jesus shared his Good News with others:

- Feasted with drunks, prostitutes, embezzlers, thieves
- Sat down and asked for a drink of water
- Spoke kindly to people
- Invited himself over for lunch
- Threw giant feasts
- Healed a blind doubter
- Noticed a widow grieving yet another loss, this time her child
- Told stories
- Walked with friends

What are some other ways Jesus shared "Good News" with his life?

6. Compare the lists of evangelism practices. What do you think Jesus would think of the reputation you're giving him by the way you're going about telling his story? Would people be allured by you, as the woman at the well was allured by Jesus?
7. Have you ever admired a person from afar and just knew you needed to know them so they could rub off on you? Or had a friend you couldn't wait to introduce others because you wanted people to see what you see in them? Describe one person you admire. What is it about them that draws you in? How did you come to admire them?
8. Read the exchange between Jesus and the woman at the well. Discuss the interaction. How did he save her that day? What kind of salvation did he bring? What was his position toward her? What was the result of his time with her?
9. I love when I walk downtown and can smell what's cooking in various restaurants. I can usually use my nose to guide me where I want to go and definitely keep me from something awful. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 2:15 (NIV), "For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing." Meekness is like a great smell. What is the "aroma" of meekness?
10. Come up with a list of "good smells" that would be a scent you'd like to leave. (For example: kind, generous, loving.)
11. Do you have any fears or hesitations about meekness being a master plan of evangelism? Discuss those and reread the five examples of how people came to faith on pages 112–113.
12. A friend once said, "It's our job to be faithful and God's job to be fruitful." Does your current understanding of evangelism position you as one who is faithful or one who is in charge of bearing fruit in other people's lives?

CHAPTER 7: God on the Go: Spiritual Formation between the Rubber and the Road

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matt. 5:6 NIV). If you've been in the church any length of time, you've heard this before. Most often it has been translated as this: "Blessed are those who live upstanding moral lives, for they will have special standing with God." We've totally missed the point! Hungering for something is something we know very little of, but we have neighbors in the Horn of Africa who currently know famine in such a desperate way that people all over the world are fighting to bring food and water to those who live there. These people know that without food and without water, people die. We could sit under their care and truly hear stories of what it is to hunger and thirst. Hunger and thirst are promptings that lead us to feed the body so that it can keep moving. Jesus was not speaking of deprivation and bingeing, which is how most of us treat our spiritual lives. No, he was speaking of balance, a constant longing that led to a continual, ongoing satisfaction of those longings, brought through encounters with God. Blessed are those whose hunger and thirst lead them to being filled.

1. What were you taught about righteousness in your religious upbringing? How is that different from what was written in this chapter?
2. Hunger and thirst are easily understood as a concept (although most of us, in the US, know more about indulgence than deprivation). Describe a healthy approach to eating and water consumption. Use these descriptions to guide your understanding of righteousness and being filled by God.
3. Read John 6:28–29 (NIV): “They asked him, ‘What must we do to do the works God requires?’ Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.’” Describe how these words of Jesus influence your understanding of hungering and thirsting for righteousness. What is the work involved in satisfying hunger and thirst of righteousness?
4. “As you are going,” “on the move,” and “throughout your day” are phrases describing one’s daily movements. Describe something that you do rhythmically throughout your day. How did that become a practice?
5. Being filled—our bodies are very comfortable with the concept. But our spirits? That is another story. We impoverish our spirit, making it go hungry or only filling it with prepackaged frozen TV dinners, hoping that the prepackaged ideas will fill in the same ways across the board. List the practices that you have come to believe are the way to be filled.
6. Hunger and thirst cannot be satisfied in the same way for every person. What is filling to you may not fill someone else. It’s like a expecting a vegetarian and a meat-loving, Omaha-Steaks-monthly-subscribing carnivore to be filled by the exact same meal. It can happen, but it’s rare. What fills you? Is it beauty, art, a hike, car races, alone time, or time with people? Do you have a particular scent that you love, flavor you crave, or sport that causes you to immediately feel alive? When Eric Liddell, a famous British Olympian, was struggling with his purpose which felt more spiritual and a talent that was God-given, he said, “I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure.” Where do you know God’s pleasure? Where do you connect with his heart? When do you feel alive? At what moments do you know you’re divinely connected to the Almighty? Talk about these things.
7. Activity: Part of connecting with God and filling your hunger and thirst is the ability or practice of recognition and celebration. You heard me—celebration!
 - You’ll need a stack of 3x5 cards and a Sharpie (really any pen will do, but I’m a marker lover).
 - Write one of God’s names or attributes on each card. Fill as many cards as you can. Here are a few to get you started: love, Prince of Peace, Almighty, pure, holy, glorious. You get the point. Once you complete this step, there are many ways to use the cards.
 - Choose one card, and for one week look for manifestations of the name or attribute as you are going through life. Keep a running list, and at the end of the week, share your list with someone.
 - Host a dinner party with a great mix of friends. Spread the cards out all over the table where you’re eating, and don’t answer any questions about them. At some point during the meal, have everyone choose a word that they have experienced at some point during the week. Have each person share how they experienced their word, and then close the time celebrating the goodness, power, beauty, majesty, peace, and so on you have experienced.
 - Use the cards as a way to pray for people, simply evoking the name of God over a friend, family member, or other person in your life.
 - Choose a card and do an activity during the course of your week that will actively place you in a circumstance where you should encounter the attribute. Is the name beauty? Go to an art museum. Is it majesty? Go to the beach (if you live near one) and watch the waves. Engage your surroundings through the lens of the character of God you are wanting to remember. (Your surroundings are a conduit to experiencing, learning from, or connecting with God.)
 - Create a worship experience that is fully centered on who God is and what he is like. Do not use music in this experience, but instead use your cards to help people have eyes pointed toward God and begin to recognize him in the everyday.

- Host a party that celebrates one attribute. If you have kids, let them choose and help you create the guest list. Have the entire night take on the chosen attribute. (For example, if you choose the word good: Fix really good food. Play really good music. Write each person coming a card with one way you've experienced good with them. Have each person share an experience that held goodness. Make it your goal to have each person leave the party saying, "Man, was that ever good!" Create a space that cooks up a good smelling aroma that will point to Jesus.)
- Use the cards to encourage others.
- As you write the cards, you are getting to know some things about who God is and what he is like. Use them to be a teacher or to encourage you. This will help you to more easily recognize him. It's easier to be filled when you know what you're looking for.

CHAPTER 8: Sin in the Periphery: Leaving Judgmentalism in the Rearview Mirror

Jesus knows that when people are able to leapfrog man-made boundaries and find relationship with the Most High God and are "at home" in that love, they will want to change their behavior. Although our sin cost him everything, he no longer finds us or our sin offensive. He sees sin as a hindrance to our best lives, but he does not cut off relationship because we have not arrived at perfection.

Mercy over judgment. It's actually hard to read. "But wait!" we say. "God is disgusted with us! Our behavior keeps us from relationship." Our sin separates us from God, yes, but our sin doesn't keep us from being able to have relationship with him. Jesus came to provide mercy. Ephesians 2:4-5 says, "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved" (NIV). When Jesus sees us, it is his love that compels him to mercy. Our lives, then, when we apprentice after Jesus, become filled with love toward others that moves us from judgment to mercy.

1. Most religious Christians have a hit list of sorts that leads to the discounting of mercy. Everyone deserves judgment, some say. So who's on your hit list?
2. Jesus was called a friend of sinners (and not in a good way) by the religious elite. Have you ever experienced being shunned, overlooked, or judged because of a particular struggle, choice, behavior, or belief? Share the experience.
3. Have you ever judged, looked away from, discounted, or ridiculed another for a particular struggle, choice, behavior, or belief? Share about that experience. What kept you from showing mercy?
4. Split your group into two groups. (If you're going through these questions alone, answer part 1, and then complete part 2 either later in the day or the next day.)
 - (1) Have one group write down the sin struggles of those within the church.
 - (2) Have the other group (or you later in the day) write down the sin struggles of those outside the church.
 - (3) Get together (if alone, journal this question) and discuss the two lists, comparing and contrasting them. What do you see? What stands out? Talk about it.
5. What qualifiers do you use for the people around you? Do you say things like, "I met this homeless guy," "this trashy girl at work," "this rich guy," "that Democrat," "he must have been a Republican," "my rich friend," and so on? The qualifiers we use often indicate where and how we judge someone. People's issues become their identity as opposed to their story or their being. Talk with your friends about this concept. What do you think? Do you have people in your life who you see as issues instead of people?
6. Activity: Take a little personal inventory. Who are the people in this world to whom you struggle to relate or flat-out don't show mercy? Here are some popular one's for most religious Christians: Muslims, gays, unwed moms, porn stars, Democrats, atheists, alcoholics, women who don't dress appropriately, prostitutes, Mormons, people from other denominations, etc.

After you've made your list, pick one people group from your inventory and pray that God would gift you with a relationship with a person from within that people group. It is a lot easier to judge a person whose story you do not know. So with that in mind, pray for opportunity to know someone you judge. When you're given that gift, seek to make that person your friend. (Don't do it to save them. Do it to know them.) Have the group of friends who are reading this book with you pray that God will give you the relationship, and then have them encourage you once the relationship is formed.

As you are forming this new friendship, share your story, your home, your family, your friends, and your life with them. Be real and create an environment that invites them to be real too. I promise you, if you open yourself up to relationship, you'll no longer see an issue but will see a person, and it just might move your heart toward compassion and mercy.

CHAPTER 9: Jesus on a John Deere: Bulldozing Boundaries to Daddy's Dinner

"Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God" (Matt. 5:8). "Pure of heart" sounds so holy, almost unattainable. The truth is, purity of heart is a positioning of the heart rather than a moral standing. It is much like childlike faith. The pure in heart are those who want to see God. The pure in heart are not defined by being pure in action but by the intention of the heart. David was said to be a man after God's heart, and he was far from morally upright. But there was something David held that was dear and tender toward God. He longed for God. He wanted to know God, see God, commune with God. This beatitude is consequently not about behavior or moral purity; it is about invitation. Jesus is basically saying, "Friends, you're invited to my table. You're invited to commune with me. Come, join me." What is the condition for communing with Jesus at his table? The answer is simple: commune with Jesus because you, like David, want to commune with Jesus. The pure in heart are found at the table because they want to be there.

1. Jesus opened the door wide to relationship with himself in this part of the text. How does that sit with you?
2. The temple was constructed so that only one person actually got to commune with God, and that occurred only once a year! Jesus came to rip that barrier in two, completely destroying the man-made temple and opening the door wide to constant and open relationship with the Father. Modern religion has erected barriers of its own, dividing people between those who can see God and those who aren't allowed to show their face to him. Religious Christianity, in an effort to keep things pure, has actually kept people from getting to God. Talk about that for a bit. How has religion kept people from God, and who does it traditionally keep from him?
3. What is the appropriate way to come to commune with Jesus at his table? From where did you learn this understanding? Knowing that we come to our understandings of Scripture and beliefs from teachers, family, experiences, personal history, and our own study, discuss your understanding of communion and how it was formed.
4. Now, let's say Jesus set the communion table and was inviting you to come and eat with him. From what you know of the guy, who'd be sitting with you?
5. El Roi is the Hebrew name for God meaning "the God who sees." God knows the intention of every person. Religion creates systems to keep people out so they do not defile God, but God is the one who sees . . . everything! Who do we think we're kidding? Who are a few of the folks with whom Jesus had relationship that shocked those around him?
6. "The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7 NIV). The Lord said those words to Samuel when he was checking out David to see if his scrawny little body could actually embody a king. Jesus was constantly looking at people through the door of their heart. That perspective changes everything. People are no longer the sum of their behavior. Talk about how that changes things.
7. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matt. 5:8 NIV). How does that redefine things for you?

CHAPTER 10: Bringing Heaven to Earth: The No-Spin Zone for the Sabbath and Sabbath Giving

The author of the book of James defines simply and clearly what God considers to be “pure and faultless” religion—or in other words, what God considers the “real deal” in kingdom language. It is simply “to look after orphans and widows” (James 1:26–27 NIV). Out of all we do (including “spiritual disciplines”) and all we spend our money on in the name of God, what appears to please God the most is caring for those in dire need, and thus bringing a little heavenly peace to the world.

Shalom is the idea of total and complete peace. It’s not just a peaceful feeling, like the way you feel looking at the stars on a summer night, but a total and complete peace. Your mind, body, soul, home, community, and relationships—everything collides with peace and harmony. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9 NIV). Blessed are those who bring peace into chaos, who invite harmony in relationships, who step into their communities and work for peace and harmony in every circumstance.

1. If your church were to disappear from its corner of the world, would the community notice it’s gone? (And I don’t mean just the local waiters and waitresses celebrating that they’ll get better tips on Sunday from now on and neighbors who won’t have to worry about parking or traffic.) Why would or wouldn’t the community grieve your absence?
2. How many times have you heard someone say, “The Lord helps those who help themselves”? Bull! Life is hard, unfair, cruel, and broken. There is need all around us, and it sometimes is the fault of the person, and other times it’s because the system is broken, a person has no friends or family, no one would hire them, or someone has a mental illness. Whatever the reason, there is a lack of peace and there is great need. What assumptions do you have about those who have need that keep you from engaging or meeting a need?
3. What would your faith community look like if no one had need among you? Dream with me a bit. Imagine your community without need. (This, of course, is not a place without want but a place without need. There’s a difference.) Talk with your friends about how that would look and how you’d accomplish such a task.
4. Being a peacemaker is a way, not just an activity. Describe the difference. Where can you be a peacemaker today? Where could your community bring peace? Is there room and awareness in your day-to-day life for you to see and respond to need around you?
5. Read Luke 7:11–17 (NIV): “Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, ‘Don’t cry.’ Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, get up!’ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and praised God. ‘A great prophet has appeared among us,’ they said. ‘God has come to help his people.’ This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.”

Read through the story and write out the things Jesus did—every action. What were the circumstances? How did he bring peace to the woman here? What can you learn from this example of being a peacemaker?

6. Has anyone modeled peacemaking in your life? How did it look for them? Where did you learn positive attributes of peacemakers? What did you learn?
7. “They will be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9 NIV). It’s an identity thing. Describe how being a peacemaker is reflective of one’s identity as a child of God. Then think with me: What keeps you from being a peacemaker?

CHAPTER 11: Of Xboxes and Burning Bushes: Rediscovering the Church Jesus Wants to Build

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness” (Matt. 5:10 NIV). Jesus is saying that we are blessed when we speak the truth of him, when how we live gives him a good reputation, when we live to bring shalom, when we host meals for sinners, and when we apprentice after him with our whole being and people persecute us because of it. Much of this persecution comes from those who are sold out to a religious sect, practice, moral code, or belief. And frankly, Christians can be some of the worst religious elitists out there. ,

If we are to be persecuted, let it be for the right reasons. We have too many folks slapping metaphorical bumper stickers on our foreheads declaring, “I’m an Obnoxious Christian, and You’ll Go to Hell if You Don’t Become One Too.” Do not come whining to me if you are being a Jerk for Jesus and people either don’t respond or respond in anger. That is not being persecuted for righteousness’ sake.

Be light. Be grace. Be the love of Jesus made flesh in the world. Love each other as Jesus loves you. Serve with joy. Create a holy space wherever you have opportunity. And then, if you are persecuted for that, I promise to give you some empathy and love.

1. What are your thoughts on persecution?
2. Take a moment to think about the idea of being persecuted not for being a jerk but for being a lover of people. Have you experienced persecution for loving? Who was it who insulted you? Belittled you? Threatened you? Or actually did some emotional or physical damage? Talk about it.
3. Hebrews 10:24–25 (NIV) says, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Talk about these thoughts on gathering together and the idea of creating sacred space in the middle of darkness.
4. Have you had a friend, mentor, or hero who was light in darkness? Describe them to your friends.
5. What did you learn about being light? What does being light look like for you? What are your fears or hesitations about being light, giving grace, and loving? As an apprentice of Jesus, what compels you to join his work of light, grace, and love?
6. Activity: Gather together with a few friends at night or in a room with no windows. Turn off all the lights so it is pitch black. Sit in the dark for a few minutes. Each of you bring a small candle with you. Eventually have one person light their candle, followed by another and another until each candle is lit. What happened to the darkness? Discuss how it felt to be in the dark and then the light. Pray together over the dark spaces where you’d like to bring light, and discuss how you can walk with each other to bring light into those spaces.

CHAPTER 12: Parting Shots from a Sacrilegious Mentor: It’s Time to Make a Decision

It’s time. You’ve entered into the story of Jesus through the back door, and you were able to observe his life, his way, and his words. Being a Christian is a nice religious title, but being an apprentice changes everything. It’s time to take a leap. Jesus asked his disciples after a difficult teaching, “Are you going to leave me too?” (see John 6:67), and he asks that today of us. Yes, following him and being his apprentice means to live life his way: to eat of his food and drink of his water, filling yourself on things of his kingdom. Put religion aside and position yourself toward Jesus. Become like children, starting over with a

fresh perspective. Be meek, walk with the mourning, be merciful, and bring shalom. Be an apprentice of the great lover of people, and your life will be more exhilarating than a white water rafting trip down a class 4 rapid. Jesus asks, “Are you going to leave me too?” What will your answer be?

1. So what will your answer be? Are you in? Will you be a true apprentice of Jesus? Talk with your friends about this. What are your fears and hesitations? What excites you? Sit around a table, share a meal, and talk it out!
2. A bit of letter writing: write a letter to someone you love—your spouse, your child, a dear friend, your parent, a teacher, anyone who means the world to you—to tell them what you want them to know about how you think about Jesus. Maybe you need to write a letter to yourself or Jesus, explaining why you chose to or have decided not to be an apprentice of Jesus. Write about the roadblocks and invitations. Go through this book and look at all the points that shocked you, rocked your world, messed with your understanding, excited you, were a breath of fresh air, spoke to you, or were just plain difficult to believe. Write it all out or talk it out, wrestle with it, argue with someone—but just don’t put this book down and check it off a list of spiritual activity! Position yourself toward Jesus, become like a child with wild childlike wonder, and learn, follow, and live!

Where to Go from Here

If you’ve enjoyed the experience around *Sacrilege* but want to keep going and actually make Jesus’s life a way of life for you, we would like to suggest a pathway for you and your friends.

It’s interesting to look at Jesus’s pattern of preparing people to be revolutionary apprentices. We know that after three years, the people he called to himself were literally changing the world with wild exploits, radical stories, and deep experiences with God and each other. But it didn’t start that way. It began with Jesus’s invitation to a few friends to be with him in community. As they lived life together, Jesus started to expose them to the life of the kingdom and invite them into it. As he traveled with them, he began to expose harder truths, more difficult tasks, and deeper opportunities for service.

This is how we’ve tried to prepare resources for you and your friends. We have two resources we call “primers.” They are designed to “prime” you or prepare you for apprenticeship.

How the Primers and Resources Work Together

Missio is made up of pastors and leaders who reframe discipleship around “living the life of Jesus” or “doing the things Jesus did.” While perhaps you would think this normative for the Christian life, we find that most Christians view discipleship as “knowing things about Jesus” instead of taking on his way of life. Therefore the idea of church is the place you *go* to learn more about Jesus. We view church as something that naturally happens, grows, and extends as God’s people take his words seriously enough to practice them. When Christians courageously move from concept to action, God grows us, we come alive spiritually, and we make much more sense to the world and those outside the church.

If you are just beginning, we recommend you start with these two resources. *The Tangible Kingdom Primer* is designed to help you recruit friends back to God’s missional life. In this eight-week journey you’ll set the framework for true incarnational community and move far beyond the typical small group experience.

The second step is to dive deeper into the way of Jesus through the book *Barefoot Church* by Brandon Hatmaker and the next eight-week experience through the *Barefoot Church Primer*. Whereas the *Tangible Kingdom Primer* is geared toward Christians, the *Barefoot Church Primer* allows you a unique opportunity to invite non-Christians or tapped out, jaded Christians to join your community. Evangelism isn't the focus of this series, but you'll find that people find God naturally as you learn to serve the least together. Take this opportunity seriously!

Special note to pastors and community leaders: In addition to these two books and the two corresponding primers, Missio has resources to help your church take a more systemic pathway forward. *AND: The Gathered and Scattered Church* is written to help pastors transition more traditional churches back to mission, and our website has many resources you can use to help cast vision and begin recruiting people to pilot incarnational communities. Go to www.missio.us and click on "Training." You'll find what you need for whatever level you're at.

Godspeed!

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