

Intro: Garrison. Lead Team. Deacon. If you have your bibles, go ahead and turn to **Acts 19**.

We're intentionally ending Acts by looking at the church plant in the city of Ephesus. Our next series is going to be on the book of Ephesians, Paul's letter to this church. So tonight is a little two-for. Close down Acts and tell you a little bit about the backstory of this church.

Idk about yall but this series has been really helpful for me. Funny way I know how to describe it is that it's been wonderfully, refreshingly repetitive. We tricked you a little bit. Every week we're saying the same thing, **the Spirit of God advances the Kingdom through the sacrifices of His people**.

We've tried really hard to be creative about how we say that 10 different ways. But that's it. God is moving. Let's join in. Really helpful for me. **Cause it's just exposed me**.

Sounds weird but hear me out. I could tell you what the Bible says about mission, God's power and presence in my life and in the life of our church, but am I living out those beliefs? Do you?

Like of course, of course, I care about those 125K non believers, (I mean how much did y'all spend on packing peanuts btw?) but whenever my neighbor walks by I give em the ol' soft smile, awkward wave, and quickly check my phone. Of course, of course I want my church to multi-ethnic, generational, all of that stuff, but all my friends look and talk exactly like me. Those are both big for me. Exposed.

Confessional vs Functional belief. What's happening is our functional beliefs are being exposed. Confessional belief is what I say with my words I believe. I.e. The Gospel, Mission, hospitality, a diverse church, etc. Functional belief is what I actually believe which is confirmed by how I live. We always need to have a pulse on where there's a discrepancy. One of the goals of our preaching is to help you see the discrepancy in your beliefs and constantly reminding you of the Gospel, of the so called simple truths that are so difficult to functionally believe.

All that to say, my big point tonight is nothing new, something that we've said 10 ways that I'm going to say again, and it's still going to expose us:

Following Jesus is disruptive. Here's how we'll see it tonight:

- 1. Following Jesus will disrupt your life.**
- 2. Following Jesus will disrupt our city.**

I'll unpack as we go but that's what we're going to see tonight. Following Jesus is disruptive.

Hop in with me at Acts 19, starting in **v. 11**:

And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.

So where we pick it up in the story, **Paul has showed up in Ephesus and just started telling people, left and right, about Jesus.** And as part of this, Paul is also performing miracles. He's healing people. And the amount of power from God he's walking in is so ridiculous, that even the Kleenexes he carries with him are healing people.

So this is happening, and some other people take notice of it and want to capitalize on it, in v. 13:

*Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists [because apparently that's a job you can have] undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." [they try to co-opt Jesus' name to their cause, to see if they can get the kind of results that Paul's getting] [14] Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. [15] But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but **who are you?**"*

So these guys try to **hijack Jesus' name** for their own purposes, but the demon isn't having it. Just a word of advice: if you are casting out demons for a living, and the demon stops to lecture you on the right and wrong way to do it, you may want to find a new profession. *Then* look what happens, v. 16:

*And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house **naked and wounded.***

Quick discernment training. If you start a fight with clothes on, and you leave with no clothes on, you lost. Bad. These dudes take off running they're so terrified.

But here's the part I want us to focus in on—what happens as a result of all this. Look at v. 17 with me:

*And **this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.** [18] Also many of those who were now believers came, **confessing and divulging their practices.** [19] And a number of those who had practiced magic arts **brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all.***

So in Ephesus, a lot of people were caught up in this weird, cultic sort of magic. It was actually really common there in the city. It was a big part of Greek and Roman culture. Quite literally, they would compile spells and incantations where they were calling on supernatural powers or pagan gods to do something for them. And would sell them for a lot of money.

But once people see all this go down and start to follow Jesus, **they realize how worthless all that stuff is.** And because of that, **they bring everything they own that represents that way of life, they put it in a pile and burn it.** And not just *some* of it—take a look at the second half of v. 19:

*And they counted the value of them and found it came to **fifty thousand pieces of silver.***

When you run the numbers to find out how much that would be in today's money, it's something like \$5 million worth of stuff. No small bonfire they're having over in Ephesus. vs 20

So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

1. Following Jesus will disrupt your life.

The power of God is so put on display through Paul (and inversely from some guys that *aren't* walking in the same kind of power), **that followers of Jesus bring everything that represents their former way of life, put them in a pile and destroy them.**

Their way of life was *disrupted* in a major way by following Jesus.

These people's lives are totally bent around witchcraft, a pantheon of false gods and goddesses, and that's just the start of their idolatry. The gods of money, status and power ruled over these people. And they're now literally tossing away these idols into a bonfire.

And following Jesus has always worked this way, back then *and* in our culture today. **Following Jesus is necessarily disruptive.** It always will be disruptive.

So think about this: Jesus says in Matthew 16:24 that the point of life is to “pick up your cross, deny yourself, and follow him.” That is *necessarily disruptive* to what we hear every day—**that the point of life is to chase your dreams and do whatever makes you happy.**

They're *opposites*. There's no way for following Jesus to not *disrupt* that. I'll give you another one. Jesus says in Luke 12:15 “life does not consist of the abundance of your possessions.” That should be necessarily disruptive that to us living in America—the (objectively) most materialistic nation to have ever existed.

Following Jesus necessarily disrupts our way of life.

And don't think that it has to be earth-shattering to matter. Maybe Jesus disrupting our lives won't look like a \$5 million bonfire in the middle of the city. But it very well could look like walking across the street and meeting your neighbor. It very well might look like introducing yourself to a coworker and getting to know them.

It doesn't take long to realize this tends to be a real problem. Because we don't want our lives disrupted. For Christians and non-Christians.

Our functional beliefs get exposed. We want Jesus to bless our lives, prosper our lives, enrich our lives.

Not come in and reorient and reorganize our life. We actually want the opposite—we want peace, we want ease, we want comfort. We want to add him to the pantheon of other gods we worship, money, sex, relationships.

See I think the problem is that a lot of people think that following Jesus is just something you tack on to your already-complete life. That if you've got a pretty good life already, you sprinkle some Jesus over the top of that and it ensures that you'll have a pretty good *afterlife* too. **Jesus is like an after life retirement account.**

But that's not how it works. **Dallas Williard**, theologian and professor, responds to that sentiment like this:

*But, someone will say, can I not be "saved"—that is, get into heaven when I die—without any of this? [that is, "without letting Jesus disrupt my life much?"] ... But you might wish to think about what your life amounts to **before** you die, about what kind of person you are becoming, and about whether you really would be comfortable for **eternity** in the presence of One whose company you have not found especially desirable for the few hours and days of your **earthly** existence. And He is, after all, One who says to you now, "Follow me!"*

So here's his point: if you don't want Jesus running stuff in your life now, why do you think you'd enjoy him running stuff in heaven? Following Jesus is not something you tack onto your already-complete life. *He disrupts your way of life.*

If you decide to follow Jesus, get ready for that decision to *disrupt* your way of life, on a semi-regular basis. It *should*.

And if following Jesus *hasn't* personally disrupted your life in some way before, I would question whether you've encountered the real thing or not.

----->And when followers of Jesus allow him to disrupt their lives like this, we begin to see what the church in Ephesus saw, which is that the power of God prevailed mightily.

- When you allow Jesus to disrupt how you approach your schedule by making time for Him, spiritual disciplines and community, you're fighting your idols and the rhythms of our culture bent around business, hurry and self-centeredness: you will begin to see more clearly the power of God in your life.
- When you allow Jesus to disrupt how you approach your relationships, by being willing to sacrifice your comfort and fear of man, to lovingly say hard things, by being willing to live in the light and confess your sin, by showing up when you don't want to: you're actively fighting against your own idols and you will begin to see more clearly the power of God in your life.

Not perfectly, not always immediately, but the power of God will be seen more clearly in your life and the name of Jesus will become more known to those around you. That's what we're seeing right here in this church.

The name of Jesus became known to more and more people in Ephesus because of the transformed, disrupted lives followers of Jesus.

Point 1. **Following Jesus will disrupt your life.** That's the *first* thing we see from how the Ephesian church got started. But that's not all. Let's keep reading down in v. 23:

About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way [in other words, because of followers of Jesus]. [24] For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen.

So here's what's going on. Another really common thing in Ephesus was the worship of this goddess named Artemis. It was a big deal, her temple was right in the middle of the city, and almost everyone had various little statues and emblems of her throughout their home.

Artemis was a big deal in Ephesus—the sale of these little figurines were a major part of the city's economy. But when people there start following Jesus, they stop buying them. And one of the silversmiths takes note of this, and calls a meeting. Look at v. 25:

These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. [26] And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. [27] And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship."

Okay, so they're pretty much saying, "we're losing money because of these Christians and we don't like it. This Jesus guy ain't good for our budget."

So this meeting quickly evolves into a **riot** in the middle of the city. People pile into the city theater and start going crazy. At one point it says that so many people were there, "some people crying out one thing, and other crying another, that *most of them did not even know why they were rioting.*"

Here's our second point for tonight.

2. **Following Jesus will disrupt our city.** It not only affects your way of life, it then affects the life of your city. So what had happened is that so many people in Ephesus were following Jesus, that it essentially causes the local economy to crash.

Following Jesus had so impacted the lives of believers there, that the very city felt the shock of men and women no longer worshiping idols in Ephesus.

I don't know about you, but I long to see this sort of thing happen in Charlotte. It's why we're doing this. *Can you imagine if so many people started following Jesus in our city that strip club owners had to set up a meeting with government officials, asking for assistance because no one wanted to come to their establishments and objectify women anymore? Can you imagine if child services workers here had to restructure their org charts because followers of Jesus had adopted all the kids without parents in this city? How about if homeless shelters didn't exist because the church was providing refuge for anyone in need in our city? What if divorce rates plummeted because marriages were being healed and transformed by the power of Jesus?*

These are the types of things that can happen when people start following Jesus in a city. It impacts the very life of the city itself.

It takes a lot of time and effort. Not easy for us, not easy for them.

The vision of a church and city being disrupted by the Gospel is a beautiful, amazing thing. I hope its something we're dreaming about as a new church. **but it is not easy.**

Its really interesting what ends up happening to this church. I won't spoil too much but if you fast forward to Rev 2, we actually see Jesus saying to this church that 'they lost their first love'. That they had drifted from the love they had at first.

For one reason or another, following Jesus had ceased to be *disruptive* to their life.

And instead, everything else in their life had *disrupted* following Jesus.

The same danger exists for us.

So here's what happens, and I've been around the Christian world/in ministry for awhile now. People meet Jesus, become Christians and they're all in. "*I will build my life!!!*", "*Halleluah I am not alone!*" right? Get me a bible verse, greek tattoo.

It's like "I'll do whatever it takes, Jesus is worth whatever it takes to follow him. "Jesus, my bank account is all yours, my schedule is all yours, my relationships are all yours—whatever it takes, I'm *all in*."

For a lot of people, that's how it starts. And then a year or two passes, and it becomes more like "*give me Jesus for sure...and also maybe give me a little bit of the world on the side.*" So, "yeah, I'm all about Jesus for sure, just so long as he doesn't mess much with the career I'm trying to pursue."

"All about Jesus, definitely, just so long as it doesn't affect how I pursue this person I'm trying to date. They're pretty hot." And then a little more time goes by and it's more like "*just give me Jesus, and I'll just see where it fits alongside the world I've already got.*"

I think there's a few reasons for this type of drift.

1. **Excuses.** Money. "Yeah I don't think I can give that much this month, I ate out too much and got a little trigger happy on amazon. It only takes one click!! ----what's going on? Lifes about me

Romantic Relationships "I can probably date this non-Christian, because they don't *hate* Jesus. They're like totally open to the Jesus thing and we're not having sex thaaaat often" whats going on? This is better

Time/community. "Community Group? Oh yeah I love all those people. But in the season I'm in I just needed something different ya know? They were holding me back."

Maybe your excuse for everything in the season of life. Just too hard right now. Got it. But here's what you've got to watch out for—**it's so easy for those seasons to just become your life.**

- **And your season of not giving turns into a life marked by greed.**
- **Your season of introversion becomes a life marked by isolation.**
- **Your season of busyness becomes a life marked by selfishness.**

Before you know it, **everything else has actually disrupted your love for Jesus**. Just like it had for the Ephesians.

2. Second way to drift is pretty unique to us. I think there may be a temptation specifically for us as a new church .

We can build our lives on yesterday's sacrifice. Where last week, last month, a year ago, we decided to do something hard or sacrifice for the sake of the Gospel and others... but I'm tired now. I checked the box. I'm pulling my weight around here everyone! Right?? Don't look at me to volunteer with kids, I helped with the meal train a couple weeks ago. Doing a lot around here!

Don't build your life on yesterday's sacrifice. Love ya. None of us have an out because we did a hard thing already.

Funnily enough, at the heart of both is a disruption... You've from where you were at first. Where you were 6 months ago, a year ago, 5 years ago.

And so what Jesus says to the Ephesian church here is *don't get lured into that*. He warns them, and warns us too, against allowing that drift to happen. He's encouraging us to continue—or for some of us, rediscover—that love for Jesus we had in the beginning.

So here's what I'll say to you as we close: **keep letting Jesus disrupt your life.**

Here's what that actually looks like going forward: Every time Jesus or what the Scriptures teach conflict with how you like your life to be, there are two ways to look at it. You can look at those moments as **threats, or as opportunities**. Can be big or small:

- **When people in your Community Group need your help with something on a Saturday. Maybe its someone moving, againnnnnn.** And it's a *Saturday* okay??—it's your *one day off!* When that happens, you can see it as a *threat*. You can see it as an obstacle to your joy and relaxation and the way you want your weekend to go. Or, you can see it as an *opportunity*. As an opportunity to allow Jesus to disrupt your life and form you more into the image of Jesus.
 - *Confession. This is the one is me. I do the live on yesterdays sacrifice alot. And I'll convince myself that its okay for me to sit out. And then months later I'll realize I've been unreliable and unloving brother in Christ. So I actually need you, our church fam, to hold me accountable. And we need to do the same for one another.*
- When you're thinking about who you want to date. The first and most important question: Do I think that this person will love Jesus more than me? Hard question to answer right? Well, look at their life. Do they have any community? Involvement in a church? Serve? That's just the externals. Do they have an actual relationship with Jesus? Spend time with Him? If the answer to these questions is yes I think we're on the right track.
- When you're reviewing your budget, and you start to get the nudge from the Holy Spirit that you need to be living more generously than you are. When that happens, you can see it as a *threat*. A threat to that grill you wanted to buy this summer. A threat to that elaborate vacation you wanted

to take next year. Or, you can see it as an *opportunity*. An opportunity to let Jesus disrupt your finances and form you more into the image of Jesus.

There is a way to see every prompting by the Holy Spirit as a threat to your way of life—or you can choose to see it as an opportunity.

The difference comes down to one thing. Do you think Jesus is better than everything else?

Do you think Jesus is more beautiful, more lovely, and worth more than the world's best thing? Because He is. The Ephesians threw away their idols and a great disruption ensued because they saw the infinite worth of Jesus.

How do you get there? What happens to a person, in a city, that results in throwing away millions of dollars, their very livelihoods?

They see Jesus. You see Him on the cross, laying down His life for you. Dying for you. See Him raised to give you life. He knew you'd resist Him at times. He knew every instance you'd bow down to an idol instead of Him. He knew all the excuses you'd make on your good days and bad days. And He died for you, knowing all of it. Because He loves you.

That is how a life of disruption begins and ends. It's how it's sustained. Knowing Jesus. Loving the God who loved you first.

When you believe that, Jesus will change your life and the life of our city. That's where disruption starts.

Pray.