

Acts 9:32-43

Outward Church: Life Disrupted

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(S1) Do you all remember January 1st? It had so much promise, didn't it? A brand new year. A brand new decade! We had New Year's Resolutions! We had hopes and dreams for our families, our careers, and our church. And then what happened? **Covid-19** happened! Covid happened and **everything stopped**. Life was completely **disrupted**. Most of the time when we think about disruption, it's a bad thing, like the **DOW** dropping a **thousand points** or **wildfires** destroying half of Australia. But sometimes disruption can be good.

When I was growing up we had these **big brown book sets** where you could go and look up any subject. Want to know about **iguanas**, **airplanes**, or the planet **Venus**? Just open up one of these big brown books. First you had to find the book with the **right letter**, "**I**" for **iguana**. That could take time. Once you found the right book with the right letter you had to navigate to the right page. Sometimes the article included a picture. Do any of you know what we called these big brown books?... **(S2) Encyclopedias!**

What disrupted the encyclopedia? What came along and completely destroyed this **old method** of storing knowledge? **Wikipedia!** When I was in college we were **not** allowed to **cite** Wikipedia. It was not a **scholarly resource**, and I still think that's true. But this website came along, offered a **free worldwide crowd-sourced encyclopedia** full of information about iguanas, and airplanes, and the planet Venus, and it completely disrupted the old way of doing things. **Bye-bye \$1,000 encyclopedia set!**¹ "Still, Encyclopedia Britannica published its final volumes in 2012, after 244 years of circulation."

Disruption is not always bad. It can be good. Just ask Wikipedia. It's okay to disrupt bad things, but we'd prefer not to have good things disrupted, like **being able to walk**. A man named Aeneas was born able to **run** and **jump** and **play**. But one day **something happened**. Maybe he **fell sick** or had an **accident**. He became **paralyzed** and **bedridden**. Aeneas's life was **completely disrupted**. Maybe he wondered if he would **regain feeling** in his legs, but **days** turned into **weeks**, **months** into **years**, and **eight years** later he was still bedridden, still not able to **stretch his legs**, **kick his feet**, or **wiggle his toes**. **Over time** the disruption turned into the **new normal**.

Did you know that when God **created** the heavens and the earth **everything was good**. It was like **January 1st**. **Creation** was full of hope and promise. But **sin** disrupted that. The **serpent tempted humankind** and humankind chose **ego** and **self** and messed everything up. **Eternal life disrupted**. Do you feel the **echo of that disruption** in your own life? If you've ever felt **sick** or **sad** or **angry**, if you've ever been **cheated** or **lied to** or **lied yourself**, if you've ever known **regret** or **shame** or **guilt**, you've known that **first disruption**. Days turn into weeks, months into years, **centuries** into **millenniums**, and disruption turns into the **new normal**. Death and sickness are **natural**, **right**? That's **just how life is**, right?

What if God told us that's **not how it has to be or is going to be**? What if God told us that he has a plan to **disrupt the disruption**? That **life disrupted** would one day turn into **life restored**? What if God told us that he is **forming little communities of disruption** and **sending them out into the world to restore little pockets of humanity** to what we are **supposed to be**?

(S3) The mission of the church is to disrupt life as we know it.

From the very beginning of the church in Acts we find the **church disrupting the statue-quo**. At the **festival of Pentecost** the Holy Spirit comes down on the **gathered church**, appearing like **tongues of fire** that rest

over each one of them. They start speaking in **foreign languages** and it bewilders the crowd because they hear them preaching in their own language (Acts 2:4, 6). **That first God-given disruption never stops.**

- In a **narrow-minded world**, Peter preaches and **thousands** come to Christ (Acts 2:41).
- In a **world of selfishness** and **greed** these believers form a church that practices **selflessness** and **grace** (Acts 2:42-47).
- In a **world of brokenness** and **sickness**, Peter and John, empowered by the Holy Spirit, go out and **heal** a man **lame** from **birth** (Acts 3:1-2).
- In a **world** that **values the status-quo**, the believers are **so revolutionary** they are put on **trial** (Acts 4) and some are **martyred** (Acts 7-9).
- In a **world of walls** and **tribalism**, the believers take the gospel **cross-culturally** from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and beyond (Acts 1:8).

The church is on a **God-given mission** to disrupt a broken world with God's power and grace and Peter is about to do it again. **(S4) Leaving Jerusalem, Peter** travels to **Lydda**, about "twenty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem."² That's about from **Westford to Haverhill**. Here he encounters Aeneas, paralyzed, bedridden.

Acts 9:32-35 (ESV) 32 Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. 33 There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed.

How in the world can Peter disrupt this man's world? The **laws of nature won't allow change.**

34 And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed." And immediately he rose.

Peter didn't say, "I heal you!" He didn't say, "I've got the power!" He said, "**Jesus Christ heals you...**" Have you ever seen the **Pixar movie, Ratatouille**? It's about a **rat named Remy** that controls a human "by pulling on his hair, similar to a **marionette**."³ The human knows he doesn't have the **gift of cooking**, but the rat does, and so he lets the **rat lead him** and **guide him** to make **amazing dishes**. Peter recognizes the power doesn't belong to himself. He's **not a marionette**; rather, **Jesus is at work through him.**

Jesus has already proven he can heal people like Aeneas when he healed the **crippled man let down** through the **roof** (Luke 5:24-25) and the **woman** who'd been **bleeding** for **12 years** (Luke 8:43-48). Peter wasn't invoking his **own power** to heal Aeneas, but **Christ's power**. He wasn't using it for his **own gain** but to **propel the church forward**, disrupting the brokenness of the world **in Christ's name**. It works.

35 And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

The mission of the church is to disrupt life as we know it. I've been reading through Jesus' **sermon on the mount** recently. As I've been meditating on **Matthew 5** I've been so struck by **how different God's people are supposed to be in the world**, how we're supposed to **disrupt everything**, but **not** with **chaos** but **grace**.

(S5) Matthew 5:3, 7, 9 (ESV)

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

That's not normal. The church is **supposed to disrupt what feels normal**. We have a **different life ethic**. We're supposed to be like **salt in a tasteless world**. We're supposed to bring the **flavor of God's goodness** where life is **tasteless and dry** (Matt 5:13). We're supposed to be the **light in the darkness**.

(S6) Matthew 5:14 (ESV) "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

This is it. This is **what we as a church are supposed to be doing**. We're supposed to **disrupt the normal way** of doing things, *life as we know it*. We're supposed to **contradict** and **counter** a world that rejects God by creating **something different**. But this **doesn't mean** we as **the church** are supposed to **run away** from the world and live **isolated** and on our own. We're not **M. Night Shyamalan's The Village!** We don't **cut-off** ourselves from the **modern world** to live like **Little House on the Prairie** (but with scary forrest monsters). Instead, as the church we're to create something **beautiful** and **attractive** in the midst of the **world and culture**, where we **know** and are **in relationship** with those around us. *The mission of the church is to disrupt life as we know it*. We disrupt the **brokenness** we see in the world **four ways**:

(S7) 1. We disrupt by proclaiming Christ.

Do you remember what Jesus said before ascending into heaven at the beginning of Acts?

(S8) Acts 1:8 (ESV) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

All Peter is doing is being a **witness** in Judea. He's **proclaiming Christ**. If you want to have your broken world disrupted, Jesus is the answer. He can **forgive you** of your **sins** and make you a part of this new **counter-cultural supernatural community** called **the church**.

In our house we have these **Nest Smoke alarms** that don't **beep** when they detect smoke, but **talk** to you, "**There's smoke in the hallway!**" When we're baking **pizza** and **cheese** falls off the **crust** and starts to smoke, this alarm can be really **jarring**. But I'd rather have an alarm that **wakes us up**, and is a bit jarring, then one that doesn't work. We as the church have a message that's jarring, but it's also a **message of life** in a **smoke-filled** world. The **wages of sin is death** but **Jesus offers forgiveness** and **eternal life** to all who **know him**. "There's life in Jesus!" *1. We disrupt by proclaiming Christ.*

(S9) 2. We disrupt by praying for healing.

Christ's power **heals us of our sins** but it can also heal those **broken by sickness** and **disease**. Just because we see Peter do something doesn't mean we can do it. **Description doesn't equal prescription, right?** Unless the Bible tells us we can do it elsewhere...

(S10) James 5:14-15 (ESV)

14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

As your **church leaders** God calls us to **pray for you if you're sick**, **anoint you** with **oil**, and **ask the Lord to heal you**. We get to disrupt the sickness in our fallen world. In **1 Corinthians 12** Paul says the **Holy Spirit** gives the church gifts of **healing** and **miracles** (1 Cor 12:9-10).

Sometimes Christ will choose to **supernaturally heal**, but other times he might bring **healing** by **slower means** as Christians **love** and **care** for those in need. Maybe he'd rather use your **pot of chicken-noodle soup** to help someone get through sickness than to instantly heal them. Maybe he'd rather you accompany

your friend to their **chemo treatments** or **doctors appointments**. *The mission of the church is to disrupt life as we know it. 1. We disrupt by proclaiming Christ. 2. We disrupt by praying for healing. And...*

(S11) 3. We disrupt by serving and caring for others.

While Peter is still in Lydda he's called to Joppa where a woman named **Tabitha** has died (Dorcas). Tabitha is the kind of woman who got what it meant to be a **disrupter** of this world.

Acts 9:36-39 (ESV) 36 Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity.

Like Acts 6:3 said the church deacons like Stephen were "full of the Spirit and of wisdom" it says Tabitha was "full of good works and acts of charity." She was a **disciple** who went out of her way to **care for others**.

37 In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. 38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Please come to us without delay." 39 So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them.

Peter arrives to a group of women mourning Tabitha and showing Peter all the things she did for them. She's the **kind of woman** who made the **prayer shawl** or the **baby blanket** or made the **meal** or **bought the groceries** or **cleaned the house** to help those in need.

Our life was **recently disrupted** by the **birth of a child**, but at the **same time**, we felt the **presence of God's kingdom** disrupt our **stress** and **exhaustion** with **meals** and **cards** and **gifts** we didn't expect. **Thank you church family** for disrupting our life with God's love.

Let's ask ourselves two questions: **1) Who** can I disrupt this week? Whose life can I change with the love of Christ? **2) How** has God called **us** as a church body to be a means of disruption in our world? How can we do things differently than the culture? Who can we serve? There's **no quick answer**, but let's **keep asking** that question trusting that **God will help us figure it out**. *3. We disrupt by serving and caring for others.*

(S12) 4. We disrupt with the resurrection.

Acts 9:40-43 (ESV) 40 But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. 42 And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. 43 And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

Peter knelt down and **prayed** for the **impossible**. "Oh Lord, would you raise this woman from the dead? Would you show your **resurrection power**?" Peter calls her by **her name**, "Tabitha, arise." He **wasn't** drawing on his **own power** but asking for **Jesus** who in his ministry spoke to a **dead girl**, "**Talitha cumi**," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." Like **Elijah** and **Elisha raised the dead** Peter is not depending on his own strength but God's (1 Kings 17:23-24, 2 Kings 4:32-37).

Should we expect to be able to **do the same**? **Can we raise the dead**? No, we cannot, **but Christ can**, and sometimes **Jesus may choose** to do it **through us**. One commentary said Christians still raise the dead:

I met a missionary working with a tribal group in India who told me that among this group in the past few years, there have been seven cases of bringing dead people back to life. When someone

among them dies, the believers pray for about three-and-one-half hours after his or her death. After that, if the person has not come back to life, the elders give the signal to prepare the corpse for burial. (NIV Application Commentary: Acts)⁴

I've also heard of others who have tried to raise the dead but **Christ has not allowed it**. When Christ gives something like a **miraculous healing** or **resurrection**, it's for spreading the kingdom of God. Like an **earthquake**, it's a **disruptive tremor** in our broken world, the **in-breaking of God's world**. Tabitha's friends sent for Peter even though they knew she was dead. They had **resurrection hope**.

While God will **probably not use most of us** to raise someone from the dead, God may use us to help a friend kick their **drug addiction**, or to **save a marriage**, or to heal a **broken relationship**. Resurrection! Resurrection! God might use us to bring someone who is **dead** in their trespasses and sins **alive** in Christ by sharing Jesus with them and they coming to **faith** in him (Eph 2:1, 5).

Maybe you **don't believe** in the resurrection. Jesus died and rose again to show that there is a **hope beyond death**, not something **vague** and **sentimental**, but **tangible** and **real**. If you **put your whole life on Jesus**, he puts his **whole life on you**, and that means you will one day **rise again** by his command.

4. We disrupt with the resurrection. 3. We disrupt by serving and caring for others. 2. We disrupt by praying for healing. 1. We disrupt by proclaiming Christ. The mission of the church is to disrupt life as we know it. So what's my key takeaway? Simply this...

(S13) Disrupt the disruption.

Who can you disrupt for Christ today? How will you do it? Our friends, our friends, family, the sick and broken, they need **their lives disrupted** with grace. How can our church disrupt **Westford**? They don't know who they're **missing**. Life as we know it is so fallen and broken. There's a **better life** that **Jesus has made possible**. *Disrupt the disruption.*

Matthew 5:14 (ESV) "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon above, which includes endnotes and references, or share it through [Apple podcasts](#) or [Google Play Music](#). Read the [story of our church here](#).

Discussion Questions

1. How does sin disrupt our personal lives and lives in our communities?
2. Why is it a good thing the church is supposed to disrupt the status-quo?
3. In what ways can the church disrupt the world?
4. How does our mission give us a greater vision for our church?
5. Who can you disrupt for Christ today and how will you do it?

¹ Peter Daisyme. What Is Disruption, Really? 8 Examples and What to Learn From Them. <https://www.startupgrind.com/blog/what-is-disruption-really-8-examples-and-what-to-learn-from-them/> Accessed July 30, 2020.

² Bock, Darrell. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Acts. Published 2007. Page 376.

³ Alfredo Linguini. Pixar Wiki. https://pixar.fandom.com/wiki/Alfredo_Linguini Accessed July 30, 2020.

⁴ Fernando, Ajith. Acts (The NIV Application Commentary Book 5) . Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.