

Chapter 9 (The Virus)

Virus - is a small infectious agent that replicates only inside the living cells of an organism

Throughout history the main question about Jesus was “is Jesus just a man?” Sure, people have all types of questions in regards to God but the Jesus ones are so volatile. The creeds were created to say Jesus was God. The Mormons say Jesus is just a man. The Muslims put Jesus in the category of good teacher and prophet. Why? Keeping Jesus on our level is so important. If he is God then it’s a game changer.

Plato changed the world by how he thought. So did Einstein and Richard and Maurice. Richard and Maurice? These two are the McDonald Brothers that changed fast food around the world forever. Did anyone ever argue the validity of their humanness? On Twitter do we see angry tweets about Plato claiming to be God? Is Trump an idiot? Social media will tell you. Yet, send out the name Jesus and you get every type of response under the sun. He is impressive, toxic, revered, and controversial. Jesus is not just a man.

Paul healed a man in Acts 14 and the crowds claimed he was a God. Paul immediately stood up and pleaded veimently with them that he was no God. What he did claim; however, was that he had met the risen Jesus. That this Jesus had infected him. The killer of Christians now became a proclaimer of ‘the way.’ A way to heaven through the Christ Jesus. It’s interesting that Paul did not raise an army. So many people in that day wanted the Christ of God to rise up and defeat the Romans. Why didn’t Paul do that in the name of the Christ?

It’s because Jesus is more than just a powerful God. The Christ will conquer those who oppose him. yet, the way to victory is not by outside means. We don’t need to pick up a sword or gun to beat the Devil. Instead, this Jesus will infect his hosts with a virus. A virus that changes

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those who it infects. It will drive a human to love more, care more, and be more in the name of the Father in heaven. There is a video by Dr. S.M. Lockridge called *Jesus is the King*. It's one of the most riveting 3-minute videos I know. His point is clear on who Jesus is to him. Not one man or woman in history would get a three-minute rant on how great they are. The infectious Jesus does. How to infect the world in a positive way? Paul knew you had to preach Jesus rather than preach violence.

Is Jesus just a God, man, prophet or teacher? I am here to declare that my Jesus was a virus to Satan's program. A disease so insidious that nobody in over two thousand years has been able to kill, quiet, replace, or diagnose this virus. The infectious person of Jesus makes those who are sick of sin, whole again. What kind of virus heals? It drives people to their knees. To repent, love, cry, feel compassion, and give freely of themselves. The army to conquer the Romans? Paul knew that he needed an army of infected people to spread the Jesus virus to win the whole world.

Peter announces that Jesus can't die. Jesus says to Judas "*we will always have the poor.*" A woman arguing with Jesus hears him tell her that he only came for the Jews. A rich young ruler is stunned to hear that it's impossible for humans to come to God. In computer terms, a virus fixes bugs. These bugs are a code that is not right. Many of Jesus sayings appear to be not right. Time after time people tried to correct him. To fix the program. The viral Jesus does not roll that way.

Could twelve Jewish men change the world? Maybe, but I doubt it. Many have tried. Yet, only one Jewish man with a strange way of doing things can and did change the world through twelve Jewish men. We don't get a ton of dialogue from the disciples. In a few of their conversations there was confusion. Feed them with no bread? Is he talking about the bread? Why

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is he talking to the Samaritan girl? How many people asked Jesus to save himself? Even the demons were confused.

The reason the Jesus virus works is because it does what you don't expect. Twenty years ago, I hated Christians. I had no reason but I did. My Ex-wife asked me to come to church. I have to live with my answer. I told her "I'd rather divorce you than go to that place." Seven years later she did divorce me. Did she go to church? No, she is a church hater and mocker. Why? Didn't she want to go? Maybe I talked her out of it. Maybe this man made her hate the church? So, what does God do? Jesus infected the one person who refused to go: me.

I knew a Christian lady who could not get past me coming to church. She finally broke down and confessed it all to me. She said "I wanted your wife to come to church." "I could have prayed for anyone to come to Jesus but I did not want it to be you." "Why you, she pleaded?" It seems rude. Yet, it's in-line with people for thousands of years. God infects the craziest people in the craziest ways. What it has shown me is that under no circumstances are you separated from God. Shout it from the roof tops that you hate God. That is when the Jesus virus does its best work. Jesus loves to infect those whom people hate, and those who hate Him.

If you think that ministry really works then check out some of the church history. These are some of the ways that we have spread the gospel. After Jesus died there came a growing hatred for the Jewish nation. Killing Jews because they killed Jesus became a pastime for centuries. We all have heard of the inquisition. It's brought up all the time as the black spot of Christianity. I read of one incident where they asked people to renounce their faith and believe in Christ while on top of a platform. If they refused, they would be pushed off onto spikes below. In the name of God of course.

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In later years we got better. Do you think that women have been attacked in the name of Christ? Do you really think that they actually burned witches in Salem or women they called witches? Patrick, that is unfair. That is not ministry. Is banning women from leadership within the church ethical? Biblical? Are the views in the Bible on women misrepresented? It's it cultural and dated? Were past all that Patrick. Yet, the backbone of church ministry has been driven to exclude. Driven to scare the hell out of people. Yet, through the centuries the gospel message has survived.

I am not a strong gay supporter. It's not my bag. Yet, was conversion therapy promoted through the church really going to change gay behavior? Are they people? I get it that the Bible is really clear on homosexual sin. It's also clear on pride, lying, adultery and many other vices. Do adultery participants get offered conversion therapy? Should women be banned from leadership, voting, and many other things? Why do you really think we are in such a tough spot these days with Pride agenda and the women replacing men movement? The church had a huge role in creating the anger.

There has been a shift in our culture. The historical church had spent so much time and resources fighting everyone. We had segregated church by color. We now have segregated church by sex. Different denominations are based on different theology, philosophy, and definitions of sin. The backlash towards church has come by the churches own hand. I do believe with all my heart that it is our own fault the world hates us.

Jesus said the world would hate him. He went on to point out that the world would hate us too. Yet, what fosters that hate? It's the truth. The truth of the gospel. That God loves us and is asking us to return to him. There are terms though. Like accepting his Son as God. Accepting

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the definition of sin. The world has a really hard time accepting those terms. Yet, the church has heaped burning coals on the fire by choosing to hate and segregate. In love?

If you think that ministry and church agenda are not related to the salvation of the outside world than maybe you need a lesson in humility. I was searching through the Bible for some good verses on conduct. There might be a few.

Mark 9:41 *“Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.”* In Mark 10 we have those same disciples rebuking the people for bringing the little children to Jesus.” What is even better is Matthew 10. Jesus sends out the twelve. Read that whole chapter at-least twice. Our compassion for those who are different should be top notch. If someone rejected God and Jesus, it should be because they refused the world of truth. It should never be because of our insidious pious actions against them.

Proverbs 22 is stunning. Just read it and try and reject those who are different. Proverbs 25:21-23 just might sum it all up. It’s what Jesus was trying to teach his church.

If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink; 22 for you will heap coals of fire on their heads, and the Lord will reward you. 23 The north wind produces rain, and a backbiting tongue, angry looks.

Verse 23 is not famous but I do believe it’s the backbone of my point. You can either say that the church history has produced a cold north wind to those outside its walls, or you could equally say that the backlash of our unkind words has given rise to angry looks. Conversely, a north wind is coming on the modern church. it’s time for a change yet again.

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Many will say that my examples are old and outdated. Sure, you can go there. I wanted to show consistent trouble between the church and the world. In many cases it's been our agenda that has caused tremendous harm. These days I think it's silence that is killing us. If we can't eradicate sin through laws, therapy, or restrictions then we'll just be silent.

I feel that it's come down to two things. If we can't beat them then we might as well join them. Plus, if we can't win then we will be silent. Those two things have crushed the modern church. Yes, let's emulate, embrace, and celebrate the corporate structure of the church. Let's change the sin rules one decade at a time. Down, down we go further from the truth. Secondly, let's all be silent. Refuse to use the social media. Refuse to speak out on climate change and political topics. Be safe; be silent.

Jesus did not play that way. However, people will say Jesus was silent during some of his interrogation. Let me correct them here. Jesus lambasted the Jews, the religious leaders, and his own disciples about their understanding of God. He knew us all so well. That's clearly why his disciples were clueless about the death, burial, and resurrection. There was a big difference between what they thought they knew and what they knew. The kerfuffle in the temple court was not silent.

Jesus was silent towards accusations. Did you notice he only responded with the truth? In Matthew 26 they accused Jesus of saying he "would" tear down the temple in three days. However, in Matthew 24, we find Jesus saying that the temple will come down, not that he would do it. Did you notice that the high priest at the end of Matthew 26 was so frustrated that Jesus would not answer until he was put under oath? Still, Jesus did respond when he was asked to repeat the truth, he would not defend a false accusation.

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In general, Jesus always responded with his opinion. He cried over Jerusalem. He picked on Peter. Jesus crushed the Pharisees in their own house!! Our Jesus openly asked why they had so little faith. Our Lord and savior were rarely silent. He always put himself in harm's way. Put himself in awkward positions with those shunned by his own race. Jesus was clearly a cancer to the religious elite. A thorn in their side.

A movement always begins with one. God knew that. Jesus set the flame on high. He healed on a sabbath. Jesus said he was the Messiah. Over and over, he asked the people close to him to look inside themselves. Imagine Peter. He was so outspoken. So, sure of his thoughts. Then Jesus threw him under the bus. You will deny me! You will get behind me Satan! Jesus made people stop and rethink their view, heart, and answers.

Why rant on Jesus? It's because his virus was different. The church has taken great lengths to piss off the world. I mentioned just a few a page back. If Jesus pissed anyone off, it was because he was right. Their view of God, people, and the kingdom needed to change. I am reading Jurassic Park (The Lost Kingdom) novel. It says "*For the most part, members of our species simply repeat what they are told, and become upset if they are exposed to a different view.*" We can't stand other people's view.

It is assumed that people are sheep. Yes, we do like normal. We will follow the masses. Jesus hated that. Why do I say that? It's all in his little comments using the word "why." "Why so little faith." "Why must you." "Why do you." I believe Jesus expected us to be some much more. We need to strive for more. To conquer distant lands. That tends to get missed when we think we are right. We stop looking for answers and truth. Instead, we try so hard to fortify our ground right where we stand. We idolize the norm to play safe.

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If humans believe they are right then look out. All hell will break loose if we are exposed as wrong. People will defend being wrong to appear right. It's human nature. Jesus wanted well thought out answers. I bet he loved that conversation with the woman about the bread crumbs. Their friendly banter was so cerebral. How many of those conversations did Jesus have? The answer is very few. Jesus was willing to pick his fights. To win the fight? No, to win the truth. To see beyond yourself takes work. The truth shall set you free!

Church history has been known to force the truth. In many instances it was their truth rather than the gospel truth. Catholic is the way. Protestant is the way. Jews must die. Muslims must die. Gentiles that believe in astrology or incantations must be burned. The gay community must change through law. What really changes people? Their hearts change. Laws don't change hearts. The Jesus virus changes people through the heart. It's infectious.

The definition at the top of the first page of this chapter says a virus works from the inside out. That means something can affect us on the inside. Stress works inside and out. Sometimes we feel it and other times we see it in the mirror. Regardless, most viruses need isolation or a remedy. The Jesus virus does work inside the heart. It does show itself on our face and in our actions. The big difference is with others. The Jesus virus changes others by changing us.

In my first few months of being a Christian all hell did break loose. I never cried so much. What I saw in the mirror was simply horrifying. What happens when my view on creation is busted? My view on compassion, giving, and love are turned inside out. Oh, how it tormented me to say "*God loves me*" when I believed God hated everyone. The Jesus virus is nuts. It takes what we believe and turns it into what we know without a shred of proof.

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How can a dead Jesus save me? How can an invisible God's love be meaningful? For thousands of years, we believed that a virus was an evil spirit. (That's another topic) Yet, the microscope bashed that notion for the most part. The earth is flat. Space travel ruined that theory. Even Darwin knew his theories about evolution were limited. In time, we know that many factors play in the extinction of a creature. We just can't see it all.

I have encountered Christians. They have affected me positively and negatively towards Jesus. In Christian leadership circles they always want to know when you had that ah, ha moment. When you really met Jesus. Meeting Jesus in the mystical world is an interesting subject. All I know is that when my mind flipped on who Jesus was, it flipped on what I know. At the end of the Wizard of Oz, the good witch Glenda said "*Dorothy had to find out on her own.*" In the Sound of Music, Maria had looked into the eyes of her employer in so many instances, for months. Yet, one night at a dance they turn towards each other and she knew. Knew, in that single instant, that she loved him.

Dr. Laura said to me that I needed a spiritual side. In the blink of an eye, I knew she was right. All my hatred towards religion and God had vanished. I accepted Jesus. How was that possible? Dr. Laura is Jewish. She knows the Jewish God. I don't know her stand on Jesus but she knew the truth about her God. That love touched me. It changed me in an instant.

One of the most interesting parts of the church plant I am part of is diversity. They are by and large new believers. I am certain that they don't know God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus like I do. Yet, each one of them will say that they have had an encounter. He is their Jesus. Each one of them has a crazy story of how they met Jesus. Yeah, the dead guy.

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Jesus was standing on the beach looking out onto the water. It's so generic. Jesus sees the fishermen and says follow me. They drop their nets and go. That whole scene seems impossible. Yet, sitting in my dad's basement broken apart by my split-up with my wife, there I was. There sat the man who hated God. Who did not believe in anything including himself? In that split-second listening to Dr. Laura, I am changed forever. I dropped my net.

I said in an earlier chapter that my kid and his friend were cornered at church on a youth night. "*Believe in Jesus or go to hell*" they said. Did they drop their net? No, they dropped the church. No ministry will capture you the same way the virus of Jesus will. An encounter with Him is life changing. How, why, and explainable? No, that again is not how Jesus rolls. He only does the unexplainable. Somehow though the Dr. Laura tape, while being completely isolated from people, I was touched by Christ Jesus.

I am not by and large against ministry. It has its place. Preaching is a good ministry. Nursing is a great ministry. Those types of ministries try to touch people in a tangible way. To communicate and serve. What the Jesus virus does that most ministries cannot do is get inside. I was a hard man. The first time I saw the John 3:16 sign on TV was seven years before I came to church. You were not getting me in your house, Jesus. Yet, alone in a basement Jesus walked in freely. There was no fight. I believe Pilots wife was infected. Mary Magdalen was infected. How did Jesus get into their lives in the first place?

Like I said, church leaders love to ask when you were infected? The answer should be instantaneous. It's not rocket science. In the Alliance denomination, their founder A.B. Simpson believed there were two moments with Christ Jesus. The first was head knowledge. The second was the encounter. The "it" moment. That moment being touched supernaturally by Jesus.

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I deliver mail. Some doors have a sign that says no peddlers, sellers, or religious. I'd love to write on their door "and no God too?" Yet, in spite of the that sign Jesus can walk in to a heart. I know, He walked into mine, and I didn't see that coming. Once affected, I turned the radio at work to my Christian station. I read my Bible in the open. I wrestled over how to treat people better. I was on fire. Where did that fire come from? A Jesus virus.

This virus can only be spread one person at a time. Andrew was following John the Baptist. He met Jesus and ran to tell his brother. Jesus met a woman at the well. She ran and told others. It says they just believed her. How stunning. How could a man crucified on a cross believe the guy hanging next to him was special? This virus is like cupid's arrow. When it hits you are done like dinner? Even on a cross you'll change.

Think about it. God knew that one man could change the world. One Abraham changed many. So, did one Noah. One Rahab, Esther, Mary, and Peter. Each one infected another. I love it that Sarah laughed at God. Then she was silent. Why? She was humbled when she got pregnant. Now she knew God in a different way. Did you notice that Timothy never says a word in the Bible? Yet, he clearly knew. People from all different walks of life touched by an unseen God.

I just want you to see ministry in its place. To see the church structure in its place. Should we have programs to reach the lost? I say no. Just be the body. What compelled Mark Hall to sing "if we are the body?" I'm sure it's because his church wasn't doing it right. He knew it. The virus had moved him to speak. To stir the pot. He wanted to touch more in Jesus' name. I bet he was stuck. Ministry is tied to numbers and money. Maybe your church pastors say it's not true but the laymen in your church know it's true. We all see it. Ministry leaders would fight tooth and nail to save ministry even if they knew it does not work. Why? It's a secure job creator.

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Numbers mean nothing. Money means nothing. Touching people with the love of Jesus means something. I just watched a pastor search all week for a prop. How much time was spent searching? How much time was spent writing it into his sermon? His mind probably drifted this way and that to make it flow with the message. It's a shame really. The virus was meant to change people. To work from the inside out. Why do we spend so much time trying to affect people from the outside in?

The Jesus virus comes in through its own means. I believe it's spiritual and miraculous. No human can stop it. Recently, Kanye West has posted that he has changed through Jesus. I have read hundreds of posts denouncing his conversion. Are we so damn sure he is not infected? Why would that guy bother with Jesus? To sell millions of what? Quite honestly, Jesus could ruin his career. His followers are generally not Christian. Read this verse from his song called God is *"You won't ever be the same when you call on Jesus' name. Listen to the words I'm sayin', Jesus saved me, now I'm sane."*

Jesus told them how this virus works. It's not by having a chart that says 2 equals four and four equals eight and so on. It is not by having a marker of 250 people to signal church expansion. No, it comes down to Jesus saying in John 13 *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* Oh, you will know. Ananias knew when he met Paul, and not before. We can encounter Jesus through people. Yeah, people that were radically changed by the Jesus virus.

I am going to talk about ministry. It's a necessary evil in my mind. To change a life? No! Ministry should exist solely to touch a life with the Jesus virus. Does it have to be planned or intentional? That's the kicker. Ministry is intentional. Jesus infects people in unplanned and unintentional ways. God didn't mean too? What I'm saying is that in human terms Jesus touches

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our lives in ways we would never think of. It seems so random. Random and intentional is Gods way.

I had Christian friends praying for me. They found it hard to believe that I would go to church when I declared I would. I had people who just don't believe me. They don't believe in God, my conversion, or how it happened. For many, there is a process. A human path to God. For Jesus there is no path. I have heard pastors say that Jesus only comes in to those who ask. It's true that I cried out to God a month before my split-up with my Ex "*God if your real I need help; I don't know what to do?*" A month later I respond without ever entering a church while I was alone.

What prompted me to cry out? Somehow, Christians I knew (who claimed to believe) had touched my soul. The Jesus virus passed from someone to me. It's like this in Zechariah 4:6 "*So he said to me, 'This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.'*" I get that verse. It happened to me.

Do we really need to sit in countless meetings discussing church ministry? Do we really need to spend so many hours dissecting the numbers? Is a healthy church based on healthy numbers? The Jesus virus does not care what your bottom line is. The bottom line is people. Those who were infected by Jesus. He began spreading this virus through 12 men. Just let that sink in. Yet, within three small years how many more had been infected?

I will end this chapter with another look at Matthew 19. Jesus disciples try and hold back the little children from coming to him. Jesus tells them to let them come. Do not hinder them, he says. That's it in a nut shell. Do not hinder them. Rightfully or wrong fully, church history has developed ministry. That ministry began with limitations. Believe or be banned. We are the true

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church. Gypsies and Jews are excluded. Blacks have their own church. Why did we hold people back? Where we trying to stop the Jesus virus from spreading?

Some will veimently argue those decisions are not ministry. Oh yes, they were. We have a ministry to feed the poor. I know that in one church, that I served, they had rules. You had to sit in and hear the gospel first before being served food. It seems so Biblical. Jesus taught and then fed them. Did it ever occur to you how long it took to pass out bread to 5000 plus people? Was it really about words then food?

The disciples had a problem with feeding people. Send them home they said. Jesus asked them what the big deal was. Why did Zacchaeus get into a tree to see Jesus? Why did Nicodemus ask for Jesus body? What compelled Mary to stay at the cross and the tomb? They had all been infected. Ministry does not infect. It just tries to show the love of Jesus. Yet, ministry is tied to funds, projects and plans. It's based on successful numbers. I am not so sure Jesus planned out the woman at the well. Wherever he went something would happen. It always did.

Apparently, a random shoe maker randomly talked to a young Billy Graham. An elderly lady friend of mine knew I was troubled in my divorce. What did they do to infect a soul? They talked. They were kind. There was not a planned attack. No limits. They were just Jesus' people talking to people. Who knows what will happen?

We need to work out ministry. I know pastors will not like this. Ministry keeps them busy. That is my problem with it. They are so busy that the next possible Jesus infected person just might walk on by. Ministry is run by blind beggars. They don't see people. All they do is beg for money to satisfy the numbers. Maybe you disagree. Think about it after your next board meeting. Tell me this. Where is your passion? Are you sick? Infected by the Jesus virus. Possibly

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you're sick and tired of board room meetings and crunching numbers. What if you cut the meeting in half? Took the rest of that time and went out to meet people. Just to talk and listen. Make friends. Wouldn't it be nice if you could just infect people by loving them, hearing them, and knowing them? What would Jesus have done to infect people?