

The Irresistible Revolution  
*Living As an Ordinary Radical*  
6 pm Thursdays, March 7 – April 11  
Meeting at St. Andrew Episcopal Church

Session One – March 7  
Chapters 1-3

## Ch 1 – When Christianity Was Still Safe

It's so easy to become preoccupied with the moral, social, and political issues which we thirst to solve. *"But rarely do we see that the sickness of our world has infected each of us, and that the healing of our world not only begins within us but does not end with us."* (from the introduction) But wait, what does that mean?

In chapter one Shane points out how we make Saints and Prophets safe by revering them, putting them in stained glass, making St. Francis a birdbath, giving them a holiday. Which confines them to the past. We no longer have martyrs, only celebrities.

Church is, in his early life, about having a social group and having fun, converting and believing. He begins to wonder about being a 'believer' but not a 'follower'. "I came to realize that preachers were telling me to lay my life at the foot of the cross and weren't giving me anything to pick up. People had taught me what Christians believe, but no one had told me how Christians live." p. 38

Diving into Christian culture and Christian consumerism, in his early life Shane wears his identity with Christian clothing and bumper stickers, and trades his secular

entertainment for Christian entertainment. He calls this Spiritual Bulimia, because like the eating disorder, it is linked to identity and image. "I developed a spiritual form of it [bulimia] where I did my devotions, read all the new Christian books and saw the Christian movies, and then vomited information up to friends, small groups, and pastors. But it had never had the chance to digest." p. 39 He quotes Mark Twain, "It's not the parts of the Bible I don't understand that scare me, but the parts I do understand."

Then he says that unlike those folks who say their life was a mess until Jesus came into it, his life was totally together until Jesus came in and turned it upside-down. He became a zealous "Jesus Freak" evangelizing everywhere, until the fiery newness wore out and he began to realize he sounded like a car salesman.

Then he goes to college in Pennsylvania, and some friends take him to spend time (and eventually nights) with people who lived on the streets. Suddenly the Bible jumped to life, and he saw miracles and demon. And he takes to heart Mother Teresa who said, "In the poor we meet Jesus in his most distressing disguises.

## Ch 2 – Resurrecting Church

“You guys are not going to believe this...” a friend says. A group of 40 homeless families were being evicted from an abandoned cathedral in north Philly. Shane and his friends take up the cause of these families, noting that Jesus was homeless. In one instance the Archdiocese is sending the Fire Marshall to inspect the building in a bid to have the families quietly kicked out. At midnight before the inspection two firemen show up (against orders) at the door and walk through the church to show them what to do to prepare, and the firefighters give them exit signs and smoke detectors. The next day the Fire Marshall isn’t able to find any violations. Shane wonders if those firemen are what Angels look like.

The church was reborn, Sunday services begin, Gospel choirs come, clergy lead liturgies... “At that moment, we decided to stop complaining about the church we saw, and we set our hearts on becoming the church we dreamed of.” p. 64

“As Don Everts says in his book *Jesus with Dirty Feet*, ‘Referring to the church as a building is like referring to people as two-by-fours.’” p. 62

“I remember hearing about an old comic strip back in the days of St. Ed’s. Two guys are talking to each other, and one of them says he has a question for God. He wants to ask why God allows all of this poverty and war and suffering to exist in the world. And his friend says, ‘Well, why don’t you ask?’ The fellow shakes his head and says he is scared. When his friend asks why, he mutters, ‘I’m scared God will ask me the same question.’ Over and over, when I ask God why all of these injustices are allowed to exist in the world, I can feel the Spirit whisper to me, ‘You tell me why we allow this to happen. You are my body, my hands, my feet’.” p. 64

“We do indeed have a God of resurrection, a God who can create beauty from the messes we make of our world.” p. 67

### Ch 3 – In Search of a Christian

A colleague says, “I gave up on Christianity in order to follow Jesus.”

And there is a quote from Kierkegaard:

The matter is quite simple. The Bible is very easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand, we are obliged to act accordingly. Take any words in the New Testament and forget everything except pledging yourself to act accordingly. My God, you will say, if I do that my whole life will be ruin. How would I ever get on in the world? Herein lies the real place of Christian scholarship. Christian scholarship is the Church’s prodigious invention to defend itself against the Bible, to ensure that we can continue to be Good Christians without the Bible coming too close. Oh, priceless scholarship, what would we do without you? Dreadful it is to fall into the

hands of the living God. Yes, it is even dreadful to be alone with the New Testament.

Shane decides to go to Calcutta. “She [Mother Teresa] said, ‘No, come for the summer. Come.’ Come? Where would we eat and sleep? So I asked her, ‘Mother Teresa, where would we eat and sleep?’ She didn’t worry a lot about that. She said, ‘God takes care of the lilies and the sparrows, and God will take care of you. Just come’.” p. 75

While working there Shane meets a former German business man. “He [Andy] sold everything he owned and moved to Calcutta, where for over ten years he had spent his life with the poorest of the poor. He told me that in a few years he might want to go back and visit his beloved mom for a bit, and then he would come back to be with the dying and destitute, his new family. I had gone in search of Christianity. And I had found it. I had finally met a Christian.” p. 77

He works in the orphanage, the home for the destitute and dying, and the leper colony. Mother Teresa says, “We are called not to be successful but to be faithful.” And “We can do no great things, just small things with great love. It’s not how much you do,

it's how much love you put into doing it." P. 69

"I began to understand what it meant when the curtain of the temple was torn open as Jesus died on the Cross. Not only was God redeeming that which was profane, but God was setting all that was sacred free." P71 He ponders how Jesus could say that someday his followers will perform greater things than he. And Shane considers that perhaps doing *acts of*

*Love* is the important part of Jesus' miracles, and that with Christ living in millions all over the planet that is why we do greater things.

In returning to the US he says, "As I left Calcutta, it occurred to me that I was returning to the land of lepers, a land of people who had forgotten how to feel, to laugh, the cry, a land haunted by numbness. Could we learn to feel again?"

We are not even a quarter into the book and he's already moved through his story of working with Mother Teresa. Where do you think this author is headed? Where is *your* Calcutta?

In the US, does Christianity in the popular sphere really come across as more about the "don't" rather than the "do's"?

Where, if ever, have you unexpectedly met God? (or the other way around)