

John 4:1-6
March 12, 2017
Test the Spirits

Ephesians 6:12 ESV

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

“The fact that ‘devils’ are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights.” C.S. Lewis

This is why the Christian gospel is a better hope for the world, because it does not take the world lightly. Suffering is real, and Jesus Christ really suffered. Death is real, and Jesus Christ really died. Life is real, and Jesus Christ has really conquered death. Therefore we suffer, we die, and, because of Christ, we live not only now in the present, but in the future.

But you will test them in the following way: He who wants to teach things that are new or different must have been called by God and must confirm his calling with true miracles. If he does not do this, let him depart from this place and be hanged! Martin Luther

That is the key phrase, I think. They get special wisdom from their special pastor. Being special is the Achilles’ heel of many churches today. They want to stand out and be noticed.
J.I. Packer

Instead of worship being an invitation to come before God in humble awe and reverence, worship becomes an experience meant to lift us above the travails of everyday life and give us a sense of transcendence. Instead of hearing God’s vision of redeeming all things in Christ by the power of his Holy Spirit, we hear of the pastor’s vision to grow an even bigger church that does bigger things so that he can be powerful and we can be powerful with him.

2 Corinthians 13:4 ESV

4 For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.

Luke 9:1-2 NLT

1 One day Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them power and authority to cast out all demons and to heal all diseases. 2 Then he sent them out to tell everyone about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Jesus champions not the great but the seemingly insignificant and irrelevant. As we see kingdom power in the church today, our starting question should not be “How can we be great?” but “What role do the weak, disabled, and elderly have in our midst?”

2 Corinthians 12:9 ESV

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

We all have an Achilles' heel, and so we use our natural abilities to compensate for the limp it has caused. We compensate through self-improvement. A lot of what we think of as our strengths is really just the result of this compensation. Rather than looking to Christ to redeem, we have acted as our own redeemer. James Houston

Often, when our students graduate, they ask me, 'So what's going to be my ministry?' Your ministry, I tell them, is going to be dictated by your Achilles' heel. Where you limp is where you're directed. James Houston

What we need most is not a skill set or mental ability or understanding of our spiritual gifts, but love. We must be "relentlessly personal", acknowledging our weaknesses as opportunities to connect with others.