

Simply One Page-How Do I Frame Power?

This piece was created from my own reflections and vision. I used ChatGPT as a tool to help shape the text from my original concepts and structure. The final form is the result of thoughtful revision motivated by my one page intent. Mike Haddorff 2609

Many of us claim to be Christ followers. We pray. We sing. We attend church. We speak the language of grace, love, forgiveness, and truth. And yet, when we look honestly at our experience, both what we've observed and what we've participated in, something doesn't add up.

We have seen Christians wound one another with words. We have watched people be judged, excluded, shamed, or dismissed, often in the name of God. We have witnessed injustice defended as righteousness, cruelty justified as conviction, and fear baptized as faithfulness. At times, we have done these things ourselves.

What's unsettling is not that this happens "out there" beyond the church. It happens inside it, among people who genuinely believe they are following Jesus.

This raises a hard but necessary question: If we are following Christ, why does so much of our collective behavior look indistinguishable from the power dynamics of the world around us?

We see the same patterns everywhere, us versus them, right versus wrong, winners and losers, insiders and outsiders. Someone must be blamed. Someone must pay. Someone must be put in their place. These instincts don't disappear when faith enters the picture; often they become more entrenched, cloaked in spiritual language and biblical certainty.

The tragedy is not just the harm done to others. It's the quiet distortion of God that takes place along the way.

Within the emerging generations many are walking away from faith not because they reject Jesus, but because they can no longer reconcile Jesus with the behavior of those claiming to represent him. Others remain inside the church but carry deep confusion, duty, fatigue, or cynicism. They sense the disconnect, but don't know how to name it.

So what's wrong with this picture?

The easy answer is to blame hypocrisy or moral failure. And while those are real, they don't go deep enough. The problem isn't merely that Christians fail to live up to Jesus' teachings. It's that we often operate from an understanding of power that Jesus never endorsed.

We may confess Christ, yet still assume that power works through control, through coercion, through punishment, through leverage, through force, whether physical, emotional, theological, or social.

And if this is how we understand power, then it quietly shapes everything: how we read Scripture, how we imagine God, how we interpret the Cross, and how we treat one another when we feel threatened or pressed.

Before we can talk about Jesus, the Cross, or the words "It is finished," we need to pause here, right in the discomfort of our own experience and ask: What kind of power am I actually living by?

Because until we face that question honestly, we may continue invoking the name of Christ while moving in a direction he never intended.