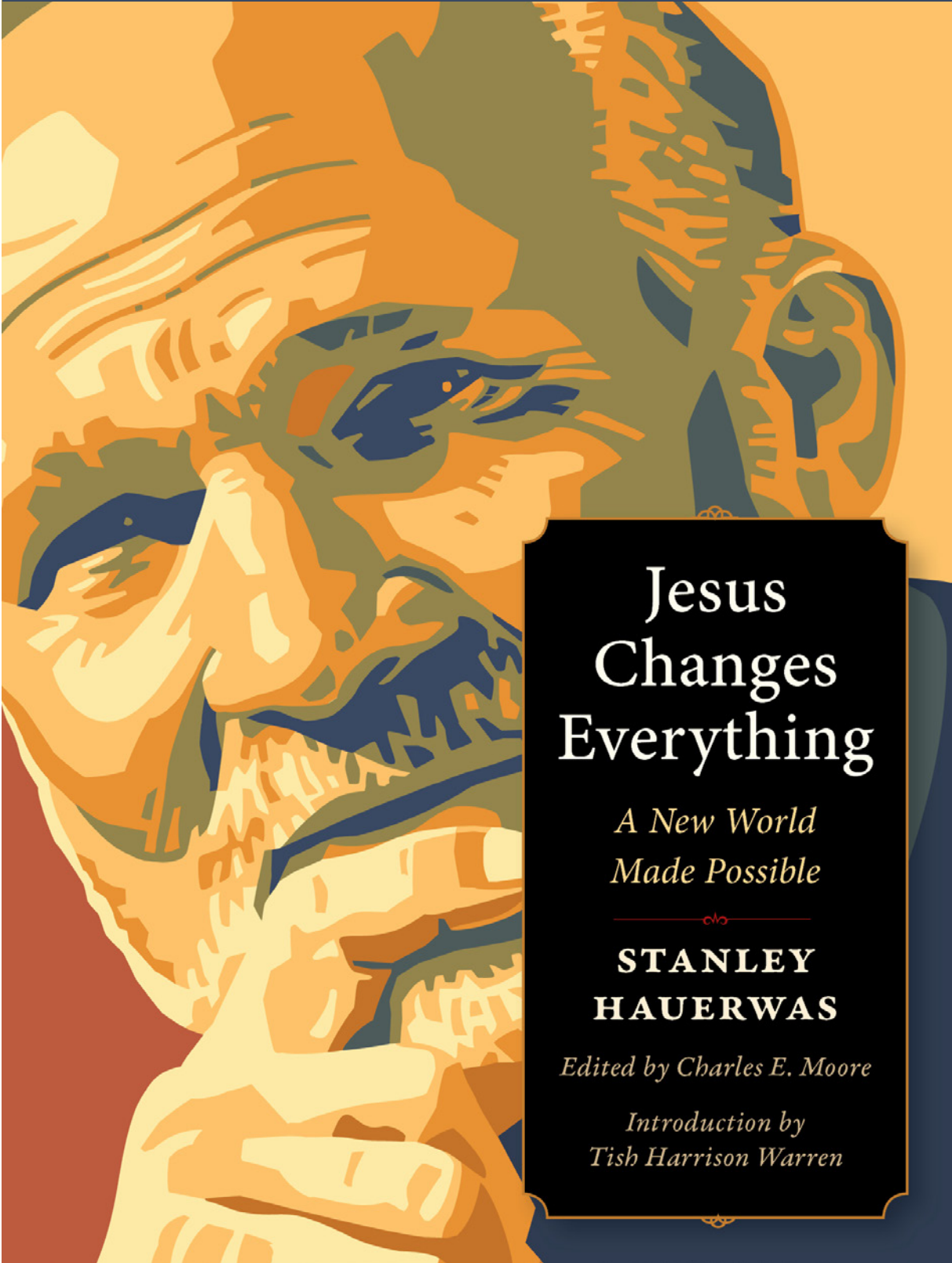


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



# Jesus Changes Everything

*A New World  
Made Possible*

**STANLEY  
HAUERWAS**

*Edited by Charles E. Moore*

*Introduction by  
Tish Harrison Warren*

# Jesus Changes Everything

## *Discussion Questions*

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### Introduction

1. What do you think of Stanley Hauerwas's claim that "the theologian's task is to make it difficult to be a Christian" (p. vii)?
2. What prior knowledge do you have of Stanley Hauerwas? What books by him have you read?
3. What intrigues you most about Hauerwas from Tish Harrison Warren's introduction?
4. Charles Moore lists a number of provocative statements on pages xxi to xxii. Which one resonates with you most, and why?

### 1. Come and Follow Me

1. According to Hauerwas, we are not Christians if we don't follow Jesus' example and teachings. What do you think is necessary in order to be a Christian?
2. How important is it for Christians to hold certain beliefs?
3. Where do you see yourself in Clarence Jordan's exchange with his brother? Do you follow Jesus all the way, or only up to a point?

### 2. Far from Shore

1. What does Hauerwas mean when he says, "Jesus does not want Christians" (p. 7)?
2. Does Hauerwas overemphasize the importance of obedience? Are there exceptions?
3. What do you think Bonhoeffer means by being "dragged out of our relative security into a life of absolute insecurity" (p. 9)?
4. Can you think of a time you have played it safe, staying on the shore?

### 3. The Kingdom in Person

1. Why does Hauerwas say the kingdom of God is not an ideal or a set of guidelines?

2. What do the stories of Jesus' life reveal about the nature of the kingdom of God?
3. What does it mean that we need to be "dispossessed" (p. 13) in order to enter this kingdom?

#### 4. Becoming Part of Christ's Story

1. What stories dominate our attention today? How is Jesus' story different?
2. If Jesus were to turn to you as he did to Peter, how do you think you would answer?
3. Why might the powers of this world see Jesus as a threat to their power?
4. Hauerwas contrasts societies "built on shared resentments and fears" (p. 17) to Jesus' invitation to a community built on trust. Is such a community possible?

#### 5. Love Is Not Enough

1. According to Hauerwas, why is love not enough?
2. Is it possible for us to love as Jesus loved?
3. Hauerwas is critical of churches that place too much emphasis on welcoming and affirming people. What do you think?
4. How can choosing "the most loving thing" (p. 22) lead us to bad decisions?

#### 6. God's Possible Impossibility

1. What does Hauerwas mean when he says the Sermon on the Mount is an "eschatological manifesto" (p. 25)?
2. Some people claim that only Jesus could meet the demands of the Sermon on the Mount. What do you think Hauerwas would say to this?
3. Hauerwas argues that Jesus' commands are neither impractical nor burdensome. In what sense are they "good news" (pp. 26-27)?

#### 7. Kingdom Promises

1. How has this chapter helped you better understand the Beatitudes?
2. In what ways is the Sermon on the Mount "a picture of who God is in the world" (p. 30)?
3. Why are the Beatitudes so contrary to the values espoused by Christian societies?

4. How would our churches be different if they were made up of the people the Beatitudes describe?

## 8. Be Perfect

1. Why does Hauerwas say the Sermon on the Mount requires the “formation of a new kind of community” (p. 33)?
2. How do we take these words seriously without falling into perfectionism?
3. What kind of social relevance does the Sermon on the Mount have?
4. Can one live the life Jesus proclaims apart from a community?

## 9. Subversive Righteousness

1. What is so “subversive” about the righteousness Jesus proclaims?
2. If Jesus did not try to morally improve Rome, what was he about? What kind of social order, if any, did he seek to establish?
3. Despite Jesus’ critique of the Pharisees, the church can be rather pharisaical. Why is this?

## 10. God’s New Language

1. On page 44, Hauerwas prays that it could be said of God’s people: “They are a strange lot, but look how they love one another.” Is the church “strange” as God intends it to be?
2. Why is Pentecost so significant? Does it really reverse the curse of Babel?
3. What does it mean for the church to be God’s new language?
4. Based on this chapter, how might Hauerwas understand “salvation”?

## 11. Living Truthfully

1. Many people believe that being totally honest threatens our ability to live peacefully together. What does Hauerwas think about this?
2. When it comes to truthfulness, what exactly is Hauerwas referring to? In what sense is being truthful a skill?
3. What does it take to live truthfully together? Why is this so hard?

## 12. A Community of Charity

1. The early Christians made sure there were no needy persons among them. Could churches do the same today?
2. Why, do you think, does God choose to work through the weak?
3. How is the justice of the state different from the justice required of God's people?
4. Can you give an example of the justice Christians are called to embody in their life together?

## 13. Family and the Church

1. Can Christians be "pro-family" and promote "family values" and still uphold Jesus' teaching about the secondary place of the biological family?
2. Hauerwas argues that love is the fruit of marriage, not its basis (p. 63). What is marriage for anyway?
3. According to Hauerwas, sex is sacred (p. 67). Has the church failed to teach this?
4. If the church is God's family, what does this entail in daily life?

## 14. What about Wealth?

1. Why is being rich a problem for a disciple of Jesus?
2. If Jesus tells us to pray for our daily bread, is financial security a legitimate pursuit?
3. How might the Parable of the Sower describe us? Are we rooted in shallow soil?
4. What excuses do we give for keeping our wealth?

## 15. Living on Dishonest Wealth

1. Hauerwas claims that "Christians today would sooner tell one another what they do in their bedrooms than tell what they earn and what they spend" (p. 78). Why is it so difficult to talk about personal finances with others?
2. Is having wealth necessarily a result of being "dishonest"? What, exactly, is wrong with wealth?
3. How might we, collectively and personally, be "enslaved" to wealth? What's the key to our liberation?

## 16. Our Daily Bread

1. Do you find it hard to be content with your daily bread? Why might that be?
2. Hauerwas argues that many of us are perishing from having too much. What's to be done?
3. For those who have more than enough, what does it mean to pray for daily bread?
4. Hauerwas says our daily bread is not our own. Why is this important to remember?

## 17. On Judas' Side

1. According to Hauerwas, most of us are on Judas' side. Are you the exception?
2. What does Jesus mean when he says, "The poor you will always have with you"?
3. Hauerwas writes, "The church has forgotten that Christianity is determinatively the faith of the poor" (p. 86). How might we become a church of the poor again?
4. How do the actions of Saint Lawrence speak to you personally?

## 18. Habits of Peace

1. Is it true, as Hauerwas prays on page 90, that we fear God's peace?
2. Matthew 18:15-17 is "a strange text when it comes to the matter of peacemaking." Why is confrontation "at the heart of what it means to be a peacemaker?"
3. Surely forgiveness has its limits. Even Hauerwas says, "What kind of community would ever be sustained if forgiveness were always possible?" (p. 95). What does Jesus say about this?
4. Hauerwas mentions several ways in which we can pursue peace with those who are outside the church (pp. 96-97). Can you think of others?

## 19. No Sword but the Cross

1. Hauerwas is adamant: "Christians carry no sword but the cross" (p. 98). Do you agree or disagree, and why?
2. People often ask those who believe in nonviolence, "What would you do if someone is about to kill your child?" Is this a fair question to ask?
3. What reasons are typically given to justify our use of violence? How does Hauerwas call these into question?

## 20. A Dangerous Business

1. Is violence ever necessary? If so, does this permit followers of Christ to take up arms?
2. Why is Hauerwas committed to nonviolence, despite the fact that many Christians have drawn other conclusions from the Bible?
3. Do you think the use of lethal force is ever justified? Is your view based on the teachings of Jesus?
4. Why is it difficult to visualize the role nonviolence can play in today's world?

## 21. God's Imagination

1. According to Hauerwas, "War is but the desire to be rid of God" (p.106). In what sense is this true?
2. For Hauerwas, God's history does not revolve around nation-states but around the church. How might this insight change the way we read or teach history?
3. In what way does the church offer a "moral equivalent to war" (p. 107) or vice versa?
4. Hauerwas asks: "How can Christians go to war against other nations in which they might have to kill Christians?" (p. 109). Is this worse than a war in which the enemy is not Christian?

## 22. The First Task of the Church

1. Why is the first task of the church to be the church?
2. In what ways has today's church "let the world set its agenda" (p. 114)?
3. If the church is to remain faithful, will it have to withdraw from the world?
4. How should the church respond to the social issues of the day?

## 23. Jesus Is King

1. Why does Hauerwas say John 18:36, "My kingdom is not of this world," has caused so much trouble (p. 119)?
2. Hauerwas does not seem very enamored with American democracy. Is he ungrateful?

3. In what way might freedom of religion pose a danger to Christianity?
4. In this chapter and elsewhere, Hauerwas warns against separating the public from the private and relegating God and faith to the latter. Why?

## 24. Christian Politics

1. Why is Hauerwas so critical of Christian political activism?
2. Hauerwas says that Christianity's loss of influence in the public square is not such a bad thing (p. 217). Do you agree?
3. How is Christianity unintelligible without enemies? What point is Hauerwas making on page 128?
4. Hauerwas says Christianity is political, but not in the usual sense. How does the church effect political change?

## 25. The Difference Christ Makes

1. Christianity makes a difference in the world, but not in the way many think it should. In what ways *does* Christ make a difference?
2. How does the Letter to Philemon support Hauerwas's claim that Christ makes all the difference?
3. Of all the chapters in this book, which one stands out most to you? Why?
4. If you had a chance to ask Stanley Hauerwas one question, what would it be?