

EXCERPT



Having the Mind of Christ *Eight Axioms to Cultivate a Robust Faith*

July 26, 2022 | \$18, 192 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0359-6

“Using eight foundational principles, Ben Sternke and Matt Tebbe help us cultivate transformed lives that are lived in the ways of Jesus. This often means unlearning inferior ideas about love, banishing dangerous notions of power, escaping our habitual trappings of shame, and ridding ourselves of faulty assumptions about autonomy. Accept their invitation to a robust faith and begin this blessed journey.”

—Lisa Colón DeLay, author of *The Wild Land Within* and host of *Spark My Muse*

Deconstruction Can Lead to a Deeper Faith

“Why doesn’t the Christian life work like I thought it would?” While we often start with good intentions, real transformation feels elusive to most of us. When we seek change in our lives, we start with *behaviors*: new to-dos, tactics, techniques, or spiritual disciplines. While these changes can bear good results, they just as often fail to produce the lasting change we deeply desire. Transformation requires more than a change in practice—it requires a change in paradigm.

Deconstruction can seem scary, but we’ve found it can also be an indicator of faithfulness and an opportunity for growth. So if you find yourself experiencing the unraveling of faith, or apathy and disorientation, or frustration and fear, you’re in good company: this was a main experience of Jesus’ disciples as they went through the paradigm-shifting journey of following him, and it’s been the experience of many other Christians since then, including us. The good news is what you’re looking for really is right in front of you! All that’s missing is a way to access it. You just need a new pair of glasses. Our goal in this book is to help you begin to see your current paradigm and open yourself up to the possibility of “trying on” a new one. We’ve found that before new practices can be effectively implemented, we must encounter and embrace a new paradigm of reality, rooted in the gospel of the kingdom of God, that makes those practices sensible and doable (“a reasonable act of worship” as the apostle Paul called it), and thus makes possible a truly transformed and transforming life. In other words, we’re going to strip our spiritual house down to the studs for a remodel.

Where does one turn to discover such a paradigm? Well, Jesus. This is the obvious answer, of course, (what did you expect from a couple pastors?), but it really is the best Christian answer to most questions. Those of us who grew up going to Sunday school might remember that if the teacher asked a question and you didn’t know the answer, “Jesus” was correct a large percentage of the time.

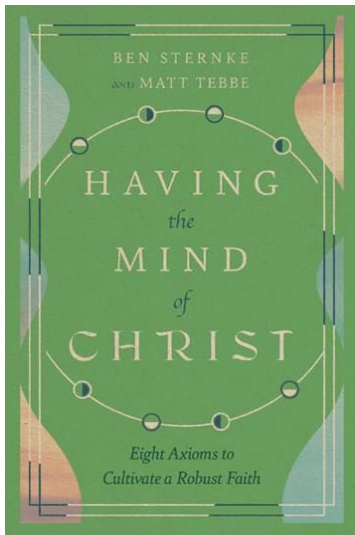
When our lives were unraveling and our faith paradigm stopped working, we looked to Jesus for new lenses to aid the reconstruction of our faith. We returned to the Gospels, paying attention to not only the words of Jesus, but also his actions, to discern underneath all of it the paradigm of Jesus. We were helped in this process by reading ancient and modern writers who looked at Jesus through different cultural lenses than we do: the early church mothers and fathers, Black pastors and theologians, feminist and womanist Christians, and Latino/a scholars. And what we found was incongruence! Our default paradigm conflicted with those of Jesus. We had made assumptions about the world, other people, and God that Jesus didn’t make. But what if we named and tried on the paradigm of Jesus like a new pair of glasses?



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“As we pass through a time when certain expressions of Christianity are no longer tenable for millions of people living in late modernity, a door of discovery is opening for new expressions of Christian faith. Ben Sternke and Matt Tebbe are among those who have discovered that from the ashes of deconstruction something beautiful can be born. . . . Their eight axioms serve as signposts to lead the disenchanting into a faith centered in the love of Christ.”

—Brian Zahnd, pastor of Word of Life Church in St. Joseph, Missouri, and author of *When Everything’s on Fire*

Almost a decade later we can attest that learning to see how Jesus sees has been transformational. And in this book, we will begin to frame how Jesus saw and experienced the world; we want to see God and the world like Jesus does. This empowers our participation in God’s life, and our ability to grow in love. This is how we have the mind of Christ—operating with his paradigm and assumptions in the world—and it unlocks our capacity to be steadily transformed into the Christlike love of God by the power of the Spirit. To put it conversely, if we have paradigms that differ from Jesus’ we won’t be able to have the mind of Christ and we’ll misunderstand what he’s doing and misapply his teaching.

We don’t uncover the paradigm of Jesus by locking ourselves in a library and scouring the Gospels for tidbits of information we hadn’t noticed before. Why? Because we’re still reading the Gospels through our old paradigms—so what we see, and what we can’t see, and how we see will be determined by the lens we’re looking through. In tandem with paying attention to the way Jesus saw the world, we must also become more aware of our own lenses and how they may be aligned or misaligned with the paradigm Jesus shows us. We must learn to pay attention not just to what we see but to how we see. This can be hard to learn to do, but we’ve observed over and over that hard work in this pays off. Those who want to see how they see will discover that it is possible.

—Taken from the introduction, “When Faith Stops Working”



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Matt Tebbe has been in local church ministry for over twenty years. He is cofounder of Gravity Leadership, where he writes regularly, and copastor at The Table in Indianapolis. He has written for *Leadership Journal*, *Shattered Magazine*, and *Missio Alliance*, and contributed to the book *What Pastors Wish Their Congregations Knew*. Follow him on Twitter: @MattTebbe.

Constructing a Practical, Everyday Spirituality

What motivated you to write *Having the Mind of Christ*?

Matt Tebbe and Ben Sternke: We were motivated by our own evolving faith journey and the questions people would ask us as pastors and coaches. Often, we would feel like we were missing something with the people we were coaching and discipling. We realized that we had been intuitively reconstructing a more livable, agile faith for many years, and wanted to articulate some of the key shifts we made to help those who had become disillusioned and needed help reconstructing their faith. We also realized that very few resources about Christian formation and spirituality were centered on love as the heart of the Christian life. We wanted to recover a generously inclusive Christian faith that operated by the logic and paradigms of Jesus and wanted to learn to take Jesus seriously as the prototype for a new humanity.

What is your brief description of this book?

Matt and Ben: There are books that clarify who God is, books on cultivating a spirituality with God, and books that look at the life and teachings of Jesus. Our book brings these three elements together into a coherent way of seeing the world that creates the space people need to cultivate an everyday spirituality for normal people.

What is distinctive about this idea and/or your approach?

Matt and Ben: Jesus had a way of seeing the world that gave him access to reality in a way many of us lack. Looking at this way of seeing (the mind of Christ) challenges us to frame ourselves, our world, other people, and God the way Christ did.

We refer to these “ways of seeing” as paradigms. We seek to illuminate the assumptions we use to interact with reality. If we consider closely the behavior and words of Christ, we can retrieve his framework for living, and this is vital to our Christian faith and discipleship.

We seek to integrate practice and belief, taking love (as revealed in Jesus) seriously as the grounding center of Christian faith.

What do you hope people take away from this?

Matt and Ben: So many people have come up against the insufficiencies and limits of their paradigms and have stopped following Jesus. They’ve discovered how cultural lenses (individualism, for instance) have been assumed by or confused with Christian faith. The result is that once someone sees the limits of these inherited lenses, there’s a crisis of faith. They think that if they reject the insufficient paradigm, they’re rejecting Christianity. But not so! We want this book to give fresh hope and permission for those struggling, discouraged, and disillusioned to experience their life with the mind of Christ. This makes all the difference, and it births new creation possibilities for many who have lost their faith.



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Ben Sternke has over two decades of Christian ministry experience. Since 2005, he has been writing about church leadership and ministry in various online publications, including Gravity Leadership, the V3 Movement, and more. He is cofounder of Gravity Leadership and copastor at The Table in Indianapolis. Follow him on Twitter: @BenSternke. Visit his website at BenSternke.com

What are key points you hope to convey in *Having the Mind of Christ*?

Matt and Ben:

- Love, as defined by and demonstrated by Jesus, is the center and goal of all human life.
- We spend a lot of time arguing over what to think about Jesus; in this book we give considerable attention to how Jesus thought, which is even more foundational.
- Even though you may have been through deconstruction and may have been hurt by the church, there is hope that being a Christian is possible for you.
- You don't have to choose between Jesus and justice, being loving and being truthful, or taking your faith seriously and being kind. This book has given a new vision of how to be human.
- If you've made your "faith life" into something apart from your "real life," this book gives you the tools to live an integrated, ordinary existence with God.



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