

Weirdo

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[0 : 00] Well, hey, good morning and welcome to the first message of 2025. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana.

And as always, if you'd like to learn more about us as a church, you can go to FCCGreensburg.com or the FCC Greensburg Facebook page. But hey, we're excited in this new year to get into the Word of God, let the Word of God get into us and let these hearts truly be transformed into the image of Jesus for sure.

Now, let's show some honesty here, okay? How many of you listening would raise your hand, even at home, and say, if I'm honest, I'm kind of weird?

I know I am. So let's take this a little further, do a little test here. And all you have to do right from wherever you are is raise your hand, okay? So here's the first question. If you've ever had an out loud conversation with someone who you were upset with, giving them just a piece of your mind all while being alone, they weren't even there, you can raise your hand.

Number two, after a long day when you take off your socks, you usually smell them to see how bad they really are. Don't be ashamed. You can go ahead and raise your hand. I know you do that too.

[1 : 19] Number three, you've had someone walk in the room when you were having a full-on conversation with yourself and you just pretend like it was never happening. And then number four, when that commercial comes on, you find yourself screaming, it's my money and I want it now.

Okay, so I think we've all determined that we're all a bunch of weirdos. So now when I was growing up, I was, if I'm honest, I was pretty shy, pretty insecure.

I really wanted to fit in with the other kids. So I found myself doing what quote unquote normal kids do. Although we didn't have a lot of money, I did my best to wear clothes that I thought made me cool or normal.

I would get the newest haircut that made me normal, which led to a rat tail mullet in kindergarten and then lines throughout my hair a few years later.

As I got a little older in school, normal was partying, drinking, smoking pot, chewing, whatever. So unfortunately, I chose to be normal and do what everyone else was doing.

[2 : 24] Normal was also having a cool car. So being from a family where you could have as cool a car as you wanted, as long as you paid for it yourself, I took this old 88 Ford Ranger, painted it Mustang orange, put a big hood scoop on it and put black racing stripes down the middle because I wanted to fit in.

I wanted to be normal. And during my pursuit of normalcy, when I was a freshman in college, I was invited to a Campus Crusades Bible study where I quickly discovered that Norma wasn't working because all those things that I was doing had led me to be lonely, defeated, angry, depressed, and just longing for something more in my life.

And as a kid who had never picked up the Bible in his life, had never really gone to church, I started to read God's word for myself and I quickly discovered that Jesus was quite weird.

He said things like, whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. You must wash one another's feet. If your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away.

Whoever looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. How about this one? You cannot serve both God and money.

[3 : 48] And if you do a poll on the streets probably today, most people would say that those are kind of weird statements. And I realized early on in my walk with Jesus that if I'm going to be who God has designed me to be, a true disciple according to the word of God, then I need to be weird for the glory of God.

And I want to encourage you as we've just entered 2025 that it's time for this church family to be a bunch of weirdos. To beckon back to a series we did five years ago in January of 2020, Craig Groeschel put it this way.

He said, it's time to be weird because normal isn't working. So look at me real quick at a couple Bible passages that show where normal leads versus where godly weird leads because normal doesn't work.

Matthew 7 verses 13 and 14, Jesus says, enter through the narrow gate for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it.

But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life and only a few find it. And then in Romans 12, Paul says, do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

[5 : 07] Then you'll be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing, and perfect will. So today I simply want to kind of take you on this 10,000 foot view to see what it looks like to be weird for the glory of God in about every area in your life.

So grab your outlines. And by the way, you can always do that by going to the YouVersion Bible app. YouVersion Bible app. You can go to that.

Go ahead and click on events. Go to First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana. And you can see our outline that way. But here's the first thing. Be weird with your time.

Be weird with your time. Now, right where you are, raise your hand for me. If you feel like most of the time you are overwhelmed with responsibility and places to be.

Yeah, I think that's most of us, okay? And our culture has created this way of thinking that if you're overwhelmingly busy, then, well, you must be living a life to the fullest, right?

[6 : 12] You must be accomplishing something. When instead, so many people on this path get to a certain point in their life where they just feel completely exhausted, depleted, just done.

And maybe that's where you are right now. You know, before moving back home to Greensburg, where I was born and raised in Decatur County, before moving back in 2018 to be on staff here at the church, I was a pastor in Morristown, Tennessee.

The head of our security team in the church was a guy named Marty. I smile when I think about Marty and his wife, Vicki, because they were good, God-fearing people who were a lot of fun to be around.

Marty's a retired fireman. And he once told me about a time when his two boys were both playing baseball, practically 12 months a year, traveling every weekend with games and practices about every night.

And they'd be doing this routine for several years. They'd been doing this. When one day Marty said he was just so exhausted, physically, mentally, everything, that when he got in his truck to drive home, it was about an hour drive from work, he seriously contemplated just taking off in the other direction and just not going home.

[7 : 26] This very level-headed, responsible man really thought about just escaping it all. And guys, we're talking about a follower of Jesus. He's now an elder in his church, a good dad and husband.

This was no deadbeat. Instead of leaving, he called his wife on the way. And he said, Honey, we've got to talk tonight. So they decided that everything was going to change.

The boys were going to scale back on baseball. They were going to reprioritize. They were going to make sure God was getting the first fruits of their time. And things like rest and quality family time, those were going to be an important part of it.

And guess what? That means saying no to even some good things so that we can say yes to the best things, to godly things. You know, there are so many good things that you can be a part of in life.

And if you haven't noticed, people are usually asking you to join this or help with that or be on this board or whatever. And there's more stuff that you can be a part of than there are hours in the day.

[8 : 26] No question about it. But can I share with you a passage in the Bible that if I'm honest, kind of irritates me. Not because there's anything wrong with the Bible. There's stuff wrong with me. Okay?

So in Luke 10, starting in verse 38, we see this story of Mary and Martha. And here's what it says. As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.

She had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked the Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?

Tell her to help me. Martha, Martha, the Lord answered, you are worried and upset about many things. But few things are needed, or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.

By the way, he's talking about sitting at Jesus' feet. Now this passage drives me nuts because I am a Martha-type personality, 150%.

[9 : 33] Okay? How many of you are those task-oriented, make sure everything is just right, kind of Marthas? Okay? So am I. And how many of you are driven crazy by these Mary personalities that are perfectly fine letting you do all the work?

See, I get it. And yet, this passage makes it clear that when it comes to our time, when it comes to our pace of life, that knowing Jesus and growing closer to him must be first place in our life.

And yet, normal is that the church gets my leftovers. Normal is sports first, band first, gymnastics first, camping first, ballgame first.

And Jesus, when I don't have any other commitments, eh, I think we'll come. And don't misunderstand this. There's nothing wrong with sports, or camping, or having season tickets, or whatever. But as we look at our lives, the real question is this.

What comes first? What really sits on the throne of your heart? See, the Bible has a different priority list than the world does. See, a weird order to things is this.

[10 : 40] Jesus first. Next, our marriages, if we're married. Third, our families, talking about kids as well. And then everything else starts to line up under this.

And it's amazing when you get those priorities out of whack, the chaos that can ensue. So let's be weird when it comes to our time. Let's realize that our kids probably aren't gonna go pro.

And even if they do, their salvation is more important than that. But listen, they will need Jesus every single day of their lives. They also won't enter eternal paradise without a relationship with him.

And focusing on that first, set your kids on a solid foundation to love and follow the Lord, no matter where he leads. Church, be weirdos with your time.

Next, be weird with your money. Be weird with your money. See, normal when it comes to money is broke with credit card debt up to your eyeballs.

[11 : 39] Normal is this constant worry and stress over finances. Normal is spending more than you make no matter what you make. Normal is fighting with your spouse constantly over money.

Normal is giving God the leftovers. Normal is getting loans for everything. And normal is trying to impress others by what you have. Be weird.

As Dave Ramsey has famously said, weird is having money left over at the end of your month instead of month left over at the end of your money. Weird is paying cash for most of what you buy and not getting it unless you have cash.

Weird is driving a car until it goes kaput, even if you can afford better. Weird is not caring about keeping up with anyone. Weird is realizing that you're a steward, a manager of the resources God has entrusted to you.

And it's amazing, it's an amazing feeling to generously give back to God what's his in the first place. You know, when we moved from Rushville to Tennessee back in 2015, it was a huge step of faith for us.

[12 : 45] God knew that, and he provided such clarity of his will. He made it so clear, which I'm thankful for. He also put some amazing people in our lives to help us.

One of those couples, our kids still affectionately call, Pawpaw and Granny, and that's just how close we still are to them. We see them at least two to three times a year.

Pawpaw calls Bethany, his Indiana daughter, and he calls me his redheaded stepchild. Go figure, right? He was an engineer who happened to kind of get on the front end of some major technology, laser metal cutting years ago when the technology was new.

And because of that and some smart investing, he was able to retire in his early 50s. He's been very successful, all the while putting God first. And when we went into their home for the first time, we saw this sign on his refrigerator, on their refrigerator, that said, live simply so that others can simply live.

This couple has the money to live with all the luxuries, and yet they choose to be in the same modest home where they raise their three kids in that still has the same paneling from the 1980s, okay?

[13 : 58] They are considered weird in our culture. And although they've never said exactly what they give to different things because they're also very humble, we got the feeling they give more away a year than a lot of us probably make.

And they don't care about proving anything to anyone. They want to use what God has entrusted to them to make a difference for the kingdom of God. And I could give you 20 scriptures that touch on these different topics, like honoring God in your finances, Proverbs 15, 16.

Stepping out in faith and tithing, Malachi 3, 10. The importance of saving, Proverbs 21, 20. Godly generosity, 2 Corinthians 9, 11.

But listen, it comes down to what 1 Timothy 6 teaches us. Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant, nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way, they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

[15 : 14] You know, we could talk more about God's feelings on debt or leaving an inheritance for your children, but listen, it's time to be weird with our, or better said, God's money and stuff.

To see ourselves as managers and the stuff as simply a tool to make an impact for Jesus. And then third, be weird in your marriage.

Be weird in your marriage. Now, if we polled most of your spouses, they would probably agree that you're weird, right? At least mine would. But let's talk about this godly weird, okay?

I like what the famous doctor, you know, Dr. Seuss, I like what he said. He said, we are all a little weird and life's a little weird.

And when we find someone whose weirdness is compatible with ours, we join up with them and we fall in mutual weirdness and we call it love. There's a lot of truth to that.

[16 : 14] And yet our culture teaches us to almost make our spouse into a savior. And what I mean by that is it's normal to get married thinking that your marriage is gonna be perfect because we're just the most compatible couple that's ever been.

And we say, well, I'm not gonna be like my parents and basically be roommates or get a divorce like so-and-so. We're gonna be different because we're so in love. And what we often do is we expect our spouse to be who only Jesus can be, to completely fill us up, to be everything we need.

We expect them to be like Jesus wants to be in your life. And then three months into your marriage, 12 months into your marriage, two years into your marriage, when he keeps throwing his underwear next to the hamper instead of putting them actually in it and she doesn't wear makeup or take a shower for a week, when the honeymoon stage has ended, we start to say, oh no, this isn't what I thought it would be, right?

And I remember back in 2007, I went to breakfast with my father-in-law Bethany's dad to ask for her hand in marriage. By the way, she is a major daddy's girl and I knew she wouldn't marry me unless her dad signed off on it.

The good news is that we had and have a good relationship. We get along just fine. We enjoy talking church stuff, but I was still nervous about breakfast that day.

[17 : 35] So I worked up the nerve to ask him if I could propose to his daughter. And he asked me, well, why do you want to marry her? And I hadn't thought about that question. So the first thing out of my mouth was, well, sir, I love her.

And I really thought that was a good answer until he said, well, that's not good enough. And although I walked away with his blessing, his point was that there's going to be days where you don't even like her, where she's not very lovable.

And that's when you have to choose to sacrificially love her by going the extra mile like Jesus teaches us. And his words have become more and more wise every day over the last 17 plus years of marriage, although I'm blessed with an amazing wife.

So look at me here at Ephesians chapter five, starting in verse 21, as I want you to see Paul's words to both husbands and to wives. He says, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

So we see this mutual submission. That's really important. And then verse 22, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. Verse 25, husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

[18 : 46] Can you imagine? You will never be able to love her like Jesus loved the church. He gave his life for us. And yet what's stopping you from trying? He says, so let me read that again. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. See, normal is, I'll do for you as you do for me.

Normal is raising kids and basically being roommates, pretending in public like you still have a good relationship. Normal is bitterness and frustration. Normal is giving up when things get tough.

But weird is putting your spouse first by loving them with a sacrificial love whether they do the same back or not. Weird is your marriage being a light that actually leads other people to see Jesus in you.

Weird is spending time and money and energy no matter, no matter the stage you're in to grow in that relationship. So be a weirdo in your marriage.

[20 : 03] And then fourth, be weird with your parenting. For those of you who are parents, be weird with your parenting. I like this quote by Robert Fulgham that is so very true.

He says, don't worry that children never listen to you. Worry that they're always watching you. I've shared with you before that one of my weaknesses can be road rage.

I've also shared that I'm trying to surrender this to Jesus although sometimes not very successfully. Well, there's been a few times where I'll be driving and a car in front of me is putting along at maybe 20 and it's a speed limit of 30 or 35 and I'll be like, you turkey, learn how to drive!

And from the back seat my kids will say, you turkey, get off the road! I mean, same rude tone and everything. And those are the moments that humble you as a parent and you think, okay, I've got to give this to Jesus.

I've got to grow in this area because my behavior is more often caught by my kids than it is taught. And the same thing is true in parenting. See, normal says if we make sure they go to church, we've done our job teaching them about Jesus.

[21 : 08] So how many parents have dropped their kids off at the door, right? If they're in Sunday school, if they're in youth group, if they go to camp, if they're at church most of the time the doors are open, then they'll be just fine.

That's what normal thinks. But what we're learning from studies and even seeing with our own eyes is this. Raising your kids in church is not the same as raising your kids up in Christ.

Let me say that again. Raising your kids in church is not the same as raising them in Christ. Because when you raise them up in Christ, you are living out your faith in front of them every day even when you mess up.

Because they need to see you ask God for forgiveness. They need to see you get back up on your feet and keep serving him. Raising them in Christ. Not expecting Lynn or Mitch to teach your kids everything they need to know about Jesus.

But as a parent, it's you and me becoming the main person who disciplines our own kids. Sure, we're all about coming alongside you to help you with that. We take that very seriously as a church.

[22 : 09] We hope that your kids can grow leaps and bounds by all the ministries that we provide. And that way of discipling your kids where the parents are first and the church comes alongside them, man, that's weird.

But you wouldn't believe the difference it makes. In Ephesians 6, 4, Paul says, Fathers, do not exasperate your children. Instead, bring them up in the training and the instruction of the Lord.

Weird parents are all in with Jesus themselves. And then they take time to train to disciple them in God's word. And then here's the last thing I want you to see. Be weird with Jesus.

I heard a statistic that the average church attender in America attends 1.5 times a month. And that's called a regular attender. That's normal. Normal is picking and choosing what parts of the Bible we want to believe, especially when it comes to things like modesty or how I do relationships or sexuality.

Normal is demanding our way in our churches and if we don't get it, we leave and we go somewhere else. Normal is picking up your Bible only on Sunday when the preacher tells you to turn to this passage.

[23 : 17] Normal is praying just when I need something. Normal is acting one way on Sunday morning and another way on Friday night. Normal is making church about my preferences. Normal is being inwardly focused as the body of Christ.

Normal is knowing about Jesus but not really knowing Jesus. But weird is being fully committed to the body of Christ in all her imperfections.

Weird is putting my commitment to the church and Christ above extracurriculars. Weird is knowing when to stand strong and when to humble yourself within the body.

Weird is putting others before yourself. Weird is knowing when to listen and when to speak. Weird is hungering and thirsting after the word of God and letting it actually transform your thinking.

Weird is worshiping Jesus 24-7 no matter what day of the week. Weird is being mission driven as a church. Not just letting people bickering determine what you do but you have a mission according to the word and letting the Holy Spirit guide where you go.

[24 : 20] Weird is standing up for what's right and biblical while always doing it in love. Weird is seeking after Jesus with every ounce of who you are. And I love the passage in Luke 10-27 where Jesus is asked how to enter eternal life and here's what he says.

He says, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself.

Now I don't know about you but I want to be this kind of weird because then we'll discover what it looks like to walk in those fruits of the Spirit in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Church, if you want to make a real New Year's resolution, let's make the commitment right now that we're going to be a bunch of weirdos for the glory of God.

Pray with me. Heavenly Father, we are just so thankful for how you've opened up your word to us today and that this concept of normal, the way the world does things, the way even sometimes the church does things, this normal way isn't working.

[25 : 36] And yet when we get into your word and we discover what your word truly teaches about what it means to seek your heart and to manage our time, manage our money, do our marriages, raise our kids, when we get into the word and we see these radical, weird concepts, it's amazing how it truly can transform these hearts into the image of Christ.

Christ. So Father, we just ask right now that we will stop conforming to the patterns of this world and we will be transformed by the renewing of our minds through Christ. And so Father, help us to be weirdos for you.

Help us to truly live for you, to give you all of our hearts and to follow the Holy Spirit's leading and the word of God every single day. Jesus, we love you.

We are so thankful for your death on the cross that sets us free, that you loved us so much that you want us with you in eternal paradise, that you went to the cross, you endured awful suffering and you gave your life so that we wouldn't have to endure that eternal punishment.

Jesus, thank you for that incredible love. Thank you for that amazing grace and thank you that the cross was not the end of the story, that you rose from the dead and you offer us life on this earth and life eternal.

[27 : 01] May we truly, truly surrender our hearts to you right here in 2025 and be weirdos. We pray this in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Well, hey, I want to share this quick invitation with you today. If you are in the new year and God is working on your heart, maybe you have some faith questions, maybe you got questions about First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana, that's us.

We would love to answer those. Maybe you have questions about what it means to truly follow Jesus. Hey, we would love to come alongside you. So let me give you a couple ways you can reach out to us and we would love to just answer those questions and be there for you as that support system that we all need in our lives.

So our phone number here at the church, First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana, 812-663-8488. That's 663-8488. Or you can email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com.

Hey, God bless you and I hope you have a great start to the new year.