

October 17, 2021

The Church as a Discerning Body

Matthew 16:13-19

Corruption is heavy in the headlines. Offshore tax havens and financial secrets of some of the world's most influential and wealthiest people have been exposed in the Pandora Papers. An international consortium of journalists broke the story, bringing to light shady financial dealings of presidents, prime ministers, and billionaires. More than 11 million documents were released, including financial records and incriminating emails. "The leaked records reveal that many of the power players who could help bring an end to the offshore system instead benefit from it—stashing assets in covert companies and trusts while their governments do little to slow a global stream of illicit money that enriches criminals and impoverishes nations."¹

In this week's Focal Passage, Jesus asks a big question about his identity. It was with this question that he beckoned his disciples to a different life and a higher calling. The student book author describes what that meant: "to claim that Jesus was the Messiah was more than simply intellectual. It would be making a life commitment. If you believe Jesus is the Christ, your life changes. Either you turn your back on him and live with the guilt, or you pledge your life to him and live with the unknown. Regardless of your choice, there would be consequences."²

The world is full of corruption. There are people who lie, cheat, and steal. Some people will take advantage of others for their own personal gain. The identity of Christians is made of different stuff, though. We are part of the church on the rock. It is our duty to live by the teachings of Jesus, and "the gates of the underworld won't be able to stand against it" (Matthew 16:18).

1. What do you think about the Pandora Papers? Are such financial dealings fair?
2. How does being a Christian shape your personal identity?
3. Is there a part of your life that has been corrupted? What can you do to fix it?

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¹From icij.org/investigations/pandora-papers/global-investigation-tax-havens-offshore/.

²From *Adult Bible Studies*, Fall 2021, by Greg Weeks (Cokesbury, 2021); page 68.