



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

May 8, 2022

Worship Every Sunday at 9:30 AM

Fourth Sunday of Easter: Paul and Silas disrupt Philippi (Acts 16:16-40)

Simone Biles was a disruptive force in gymnastics. The greatest gymnast to ever compete disrupted the very nature of the sport. She has four moves named after her because she was the first in her sport to ever do them in competition. Some of the things she could do were banned in competition for fear that other gymnasts would get injured if they attempted them. She was a disruptive force on the floor, vault, and beam. The 2020 Olympics (held in 2021) were supposed to be a coronation. Instead, she became a disruptive force in our culture.

She began the Olympics helping Team USA qualify for the team finals. Then, when it came time to perform in the medal round, she decided to opt out. Citing mental health issues, she determined that her mind was simply not right to compete. Her routines took an extraordinary amount of skill and concentration. The slightest break could lead to serious injury or even death. What gymnasts called “The twisties” is an unexplainable state when gymnasts lose their equilibrium in the air. She simply did not feel confident that, once mid air in the middle of a series of flips and twists, she would not be able to find the floor safely. She made the decision that her mental health—and thus her physical well-being—was more important than the medal chase.

Biles became a disruptive force in our culture when she put her well-being over the needs of Team USA. At first, she was reviled. Called a quitter, a choker, and weak, Biles’ decision upset many. She disrupted the enjoyment of a national win. She disrupted the television programming. She disrupted the endorsements and the potential earning power of USA Gymnastics. For many, whether they would admit it or not, she disrupted their profit.

She claimed her own bodily autonomy and disrupted the profit of others. At the same time she shifted the conversations people were having about mental health. She shifted the way sports media thought about athletes caring for themselves. She disrupted the way we think about stigma, self-care, and excellence. For many, she became more than an athlete, but a hero. Disruptive for what she could do in culture instead of simply what she could do on a mat.

Paul and Silas disrupted things in Philippi. They came to preach the good news about life in Christ. They were doing fine, but then something happened. They sent a spirit out of a slave woman who was then no longer able to make money for her owner. They disrupt-

ed the commerce. They disrupted the profit, and that got them into trouble.

With trumped up charges of “disturbing the peace,” they are beaten and jailed. Terrible violence is inflicted on

them—not for preaching about Jesus, but for costing people money. They disturbed the dominant, slave-owning, human-trafficking culture, and they were arrested in the name of “Law and order,” (a phrase that is still loaded with coded racism and a troubling past).

But this wasn’t their last disruption. They disrupt things one more time when they refuse to submit to the violence. Instead of succumbing to the violence, they rise above it. They sing. They pray. While still in bondage they worship God. And when an earthquake comes and they can go free, people realize that they already were.

The last act of disruption comes in hospitality. The jailer, who thought the Roman system of violence and punishment (also known as Law and Order) would come crashing down on him, realizes that Paul and Silas have a freedom he doesn’t understand. In hospitality, friendship, and breaking bread together, Paul, Silas, and the jailed demonstrate what disruption to a violent system can look like.

Simone, Paul and Silas disrupted the dominant culture. They disrupted profit and this got them into trouble. But in the end what they disrupted was a system that commodifies bodies (often female bodies). They disrupted a system that imposes violence on those who choose mental health over profit, those who choose the truth of God’s peace over the violence of law and order, and those who know the true freedom of generosity, hospitality, and grace.



Simone Biles in Rio 2016 - Wikimedia commons