



The LifeLine

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“Contending for the faith”

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Carol's Corner...

Have You Been Shunned?

If you've gone through the experience of leaving the RLDS/Community of Christ church you likely have experienced many family members and longtime friends still in the church deliberately avoiding you. I know that I did.

I have left a couple of churches over my lifetime for a variety of reasons. But the most difficult time was when I left the RLDS church. I wasn't prepared for what happened. I was shocked.

I had been attending the same Sunday School class for many, many years at an RLDS congregation in Independence, Missouri. The Sunday before I left, I said something during the class about church doctrine and that I probably would be leaving the church. When class was over, no one would speak to me. This was despite having known all of them for years.

There were one or two people who said that they would pray for me. But later, when I tried to visit the church, most of my friends, some of whom I've known for more than 25 years, would have nothing to do with me. It's sad that one loses so many friends when they leave the church. I guess that they are afraid of what you're going to say when they belong to what they believe is the “one true church.”

Leaving the church was a big decision for me because I loved the church with everything that was in me. I wasn't mad at anybody. Instead, the church's false doctrine caused me to choose not to be deceived any longer.

As a result, I decided to follow the example that Luke shares in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of Acts regarding the Apostles Paul and John. In those chapters it relates how they confronted the Jews about unknowingly killing the Messiah, Jesus.

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10 Christ Figures We Should Stop Worshiping

Editor's Note: We believe our readers will find this article to be of interest and use it with permission.

By Daniel Darling

Could you recognize a fake Jesus? Jesus is still very popular these days, even at a time when Christianity seems to be facing more social marginalization. From political and social movements to kitschy products to bumper stickers, we've appropriated Jesus as a mascot for our favorite causes. But we have to wonder, is this the real Jesus of the Bible or a Jesus of our own making?

In Romans, the Apostle Paul teaches of Christ's mission to call out a people and form them into His likeness, but it seems we are more interested in forming Jesus into our image. Even conservative, Bible-believing evangelicals are fond of making statements like, “The Jesus I know would...” as if Jesus—who claimed to be the Triune God, one with the Father—can be easily molded into whatever we wish him to be.

Soon the Jesus we claim to worship looks strangely like the man in the mirror. He becomes a fake Jesus.

Recognizing a Fake Jesus

What are some ways we are tempted to mold Jesus, like clay, into whatever we want him to be? Here are 10 counterfeit Jesus's popular in Christian culture:

1. Guru Jesus

This is the counterfeit Jesus of the enlightenment, the Jesus who existed in human history, but is not nearly as radical as that Jesus of the gospels. Guru Jesus is the wise, winsome, slightly supernatural figure who fits nicely alongside other religious titans like Buddha, Muhammad, Vishnu and others. This is a safe Jesus, who will only ever tell us good, affirming, uplifting things, but doesn't bother us with dangerous talk of the Kingdom of God.

But here's the problem with Guru Jesus: Not only does he defy the historical record and the claims of Jesus Himself, he's also much less

compelling than the Christ of Scripture. Guru Jesus doesn't meet the deepest longings of the human experience, doesn't answer the problem of evil, and offers no hope for future cosmic renewal.

2. Red-Letter Jesus

This counterfeit Jesus is in vogue among many well-meaning, progressive evangelicals. He's a Jesus I'm tempted, at times, to embrace. He's present in the kind of Christianity that only takes seriously those quotes of Jesus in the gospels that are marked out by Bible publishers in red ink.

What is convenient about this Jesus is that he replaces the so-called angry God of the Old Testament with a mostly peaceful, healing, non-controversial Jesus of justice. What's more, he's way more likable than that irascible Apostle Paul who just doesn't understand 21st-century social norms.

There is only one problem with Red-Letter Jesus: Jesus, in his very red-letter statements, declared solidarity with the Old Testament Scriptures. He spoke of an “unbreakable Bible” and coming not to abolish “one iota or jot of the law.” If we accept Jesus as a full member of the Trinity and if we accept the idea of inspiration of Scripture, we'd have to say that all the letters in the Bible are red, not just the statements from Jesus we like to put on coffee mugs.

Plus, have you read those red letters? Jesus said some pretty controversial things in there about marriage, about hell and about his coming kingdom.

3. Braveheart Jesus

This counterfeit Jesus has come to help men recover their masculinity—the Jesus of *Braveheart*, John Wayne westerns and big-game hunting. This Jesus is a response to a very real crisis in the culture: a crisis of manhood. But a Christ-shaped masculinity isn't defined by hyper-masculine tough talk, cuss words and MMA. The Jesus of Scripture was both tough and tender, a man who rebuked and nurtured. And he didn't come to conform men into a modern,

hyper-masculine construct, but into men who fulfill their unique kingdom purposes as servant-leaders in the home, the church and the community.

The problem of fatherlessness and masculinity won't be solved with more bacon, but through the gospel transformation of men who lay down the fallen impulses of the First Adam to follow the Second.

4. American Jesus

This the Jesus of patriotic national renewal, a counterfeit Jesus who ushers in a revival whose results turn the map from blue to red. This is a Jesus who, if followed, will return us to the perceived glory days of yesterday.

The problem with this Jesus is not just that he's been appropriated as a mascot for the GOP, but looks strangely different from the real Jesus of Scripture. The Christ of the gospels didn't point his people to the 1950s, but forward to Zion. Jesus isn't simply interested in returning America to a false era of bygone values, but He lived, died and rose again to renew the entire cosmos from the curse of sin. Christians aren't looking for a return to Mayberry, but for that city whose builder and maker is God.

The American Jesus always disappoints because he seeks ultimate satisfaction in short-term victories instead of a long-term view of the Kingdom of God. The Jesus of Scripture offers a final consummation of Heaven on Earth and enlists his people as future kings and queens of the universe.

5. Left-Wing Jesus

This Jesus serves as a mascot for progressive social causes. This is a Jesus who is definitively anti-capitalist and has little interest in personal salvation by faith. Like the Right who appropriate Christ for political aims, the Jesus of the Left hints at truth.

It is true that the good news of the Kingdom means “good news for the poor” and yet Jesus' coming wasn't the first advent of Karl Marx, but the advent of God's end-

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But Peter continued by challenging them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. And if they did so, they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Such is the reason for this ministry.

Despite the shunning I received, I have taken comfort in Jesus’ words in Matthew 19:29, “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”

...“Worship” cont’d from front

times salvation, the inauguration of a new covenant between God and His people, mediated through the life, death and resurrection of Christ. What’s more, the utopian dreams of socialism, which have only ever ended in misery for its subjects, is a paltry agenda compared to the worldwide cosmic renewal promised by Jesus at the end of days.

6. Dr. Phil Jesus

This counterfeit Jesus is a tough-talking dispenser of advice. Evangelicals love this Jesus because he’s the solution for all of their problems. This Jesus comes close to the real Christ of Scripture, who is the answer to our deepest needs,

and yet He exchanges a pursuit of Christ for a pursuit of principles. Jesus becomes less of an object of worship than a means to an end—a 12-step recovery program.

But a Jesus who will fix your marriage, shape you up for your next job interview or ensure your kids make it into Harvard is, in the end, a disappointing deity preaching a moralistic, therapeutic deism that doesn’t save. The real Jesus leads us not to a set of principles, but to himself.

7. Prosperity Jesus

This counterfeit Jesus is Dr. Phil Jesus’ extravagant cousin. He doesn’t just promise a better life, he promises a wealthy and prosperous life. Prosperity Jesus is popular in the wealthy suburbs of the West,

where persecution and difficulty have been programmed out of the system. But he’s strangely disconcerting to the nitty-gritty, threadbare existence of most Christians around the world.

Prosperity Jesus is an insidious heresy, preying both on the poor to collect their money and causing disappointment and ruin when the promised prosperity doesn’t materialize. The real Christ doesn’t promise private jets and vacation condos, but offers the presence of God in the midst of difficult and self-denying faithfulness in a fallen world. What’s more, the Christ of Scripture offers a much better future return on investment than the short-term bling of earthly kingdoms.

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8. Post-Church Jesus

Burned out by the overly political, legalistic church of your youth? The Post-Church Jesus allows you to worship him without all the trappings of the institutional church. In some ways, this Jesus is attractive for those who’ve grown tired of a gospel that sounds more like traditionalism than the gospel of Christ.

But the real Jesus doesn’t offer his followers the option of following him without being part of the church. The very act of regeneration by faith baptizes the believer into the body of Christ. Christ loves his bride and offers no fruitful path of faith outside of the community of faith.

9. BFF Jesus

This Jesus hits close to home, for it’s the Jesus of my evangelical

culture. BFF Jesus hints at the truth of the Christ of Scripture, who is a friend of sinners, who offers personal salvation by faith. However, the BFF Jesus of some of our modern worship songs sounds less like the righteous ruler of Revelation and more like Taylor Swift’s ex-boyfriend. He’s needy and clingy.

What’s more, this Jesus seems to have no connection to 2,000 years of church history and the weight of Christian orthodoxy. Instead, he’s a light and fun Jesus. Personal, private, but detached from the coming King of righteousness and justice described by the Old Testament prophets.

BFF Jesus is a Jesus who fits well with our culture of narcissism. He approves, without reservation, our lifestyles and behaviors and is safe for the whole family. He’s the Jesus of pop evangelicalism, which offers

little preparation for difficulty and hard times and offers little anchor for the coming cultural storms.

10. Legalistic Jesus

Lastly, legalist Jesus is a Jesus who baptizes my traditions and preferences as orthodoxy.

Like the Pharisees, Legalist Jesus mixes prohibitions on grey matters with orthodoxy. This Jesus, scorned by some, is attractive to others because he offers a simple list of rules to live by, allowing his followers to ignore the daily practice of repentance and forgiveness and the Spirit’s sanctifying work and instead offers a checklist Christianity.

This is the Jesus of my youth—the Jesus who said I was OK as long as I listened to certain music and didn’t expose myself to certain movies. The problem with Legalist Jesus is that his gospel doesn’t save. It offers a lifeless religion that seeks

outward transformation at the expense of inward renewal and grace. Only the real Christ, whose life, death and resurrection offer personal and cosmic salvation, has the power to change lives and bring His people to Himself.

As you can see, each of these Jesus figures offers a glimpse of the real Jesus, but by accentuating only some of His character, keeps Christians from bowing in worship at the feet of the real Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

A version of Christianity that allows us to shape Jesus as we see fit seems attractive in the short run, but it can be a spiritual dead end. Instead, I find genuine joy not in the mascot, bobble-head Jesus of my imagination, but in surrendering my heart in worship and obedience to the original Jesus of Scripture.

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