



The Jesus of Suburbia: Have We Tamed the Son of God to Fit Our Lifestyle?

Mike Erre

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Like the first-century Pharisees, we've reduced Christianity to a set of propositional beliefs. Truth is, we've gotten away from what it really means to be a Christian. In *The Jesus of Suburbia*, Mike Erre reveals that we've created a Jesus in our own image. In a fresh, startling manner, Erre helps us understand that the real Jesus is calling us to live, act, and think in ways that overturn the status quo.

"Expect no sugar-coated sweetness about 'felt needs' and in-church coffee bars from Erre, pastor of teaching at Rock Harbor Church in Costa Mesa, Calif. Expect instead compelling discussion of how the Christian church has lost sight of the revolutionary teaching and love of Jesus. 'Much of the message of American Christianity presents Jesus as the purveyor of the American Dream,' he says. American Christians, he claims, have reduced Jesus to a study of risk management; we want him to be 'predictable and safe.' Erre also uses the adjectives 'insecure, threatened, naive, simplistic, mean and shortsighted' to describe many of today's churches. He lambastes our love of theology instead of Jesus, our contentment with 'simply knowing about him instead of knowing him.' While this protest continues in the vein of other recent books that take a hard look at Jesus and the church (*Jesus Mean and Wild*; *Out of Your Comfort Zone*), it offers a fresh look at how the American church must begin 'demonstrating the message of Christ,' not merely explaining it. After all, says Erre, 'if you follow Jesus, you follow the most radical man who ever existed.'"--Publishers Weekly

The Jesus of Suburbia: Have We Tamed the Son of God to Fit Our Lifestyle? Details

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From Reader Review The Jesus of Suburbia: Have We Tamed the Son of God to Fit Our Lifestyle? for online ebook

Karen van den Heever says

Loved this book. Jesus is far greater than we make Him out to be. Discover the true Son of God.

Amy Walton says

I did not finish this book. After reaching page 11 and seeing the sentence identifying Rachel as Isaac's wife and the mother of Jacob and Esau, this armchair theologian decided that this book by a degree theologian isn't worth reading. While I am sure Mr. Erre's message is a good one, I can't get past a blatant error that he and his editor made.

By the way, Rachel was one of Jacob's wives. Rebekah was the wife of Isaac and mother of Jacob.

Tom says

I know that I am not giving much info at all about this book...but, while the whole book was good and engaging the last two chapters in particular (The Redemption of Culture, Show and Tell) were worth the price of the book alone. He said many things that I have been coming to terms with over the last decade or so but said them with some mind blowing clarity that made me sit back in my chair a number of times and simply try to get my mind wrapped around the complexity of the simple truth he was presenting.

Cory Saint-Esprit says

It very much reminded me of other books I read in the past by Bell and Driscoll - until I realized many of his sources were Rob Bell and Mark Driscoll. Along that same genre. Although this was pre-"Love Wins" by Bell, so wasn't yet as controversial.

A rather stock book for this genre - although a much needed lesson and reminder. Not deeply theological and some points could have been expressed in many less pages.

I did enjoy it though - love his chapter on finding Biblical truth outside of the Gospel and using that to win believers. Also enjoyed his explanation of how the Gospel is meant to be culturally-relevant while still staying theologically pure.

mike hatcher says

Review Format

- 4 Outstanding Quotes
- 3 Big Points of the Author
- 2 Critical Thoughts from Other Thinker/Authors
- 1 Significant Personal Life Lesson

4 Outstanding Quotes/Topics

Suburban Jesus

“The suburban Jesus would never be so offensive as to demand that we do what we say: he is more interested in the security, comfort, and prosperity of his followers. The message of American Christianity presents Jesus as the purveyor of the American Dream.” “...we have gotten comfortable with a watered-down, whitewashed, religiously safe version. Like many other, I have begun to realize my own idolatry and cowardice in this regard (p. xv).”

“We must constantly guard against the counterfeit Jesus who pervades our culture and churches. The real one is far bigger and more dangerous than we realize (p. 3).”

“I think the real Jesus would call us to something far more dangerous: to actually live the truth we say we believe (p. 96).”

“The reason Christ has had diminishing influence on the church is because the church has accepted a diminished Christ (p. 192).”

Purpose of Church

“The purpose of the church is to live the purposes of Christ; to seek and save the lost and to give its life as a ransom for many. This has radical implications for the mission and function of the church (p. 148).”

“The fact that culture shapes us is good and bad.” “We can use culture to affect the world around us. We work in entertainment, political, legal, and academic fields because we know that to change culture is to change how people really live (p. 154).”

“He (Jesus) did not withdraw from culture (like the Essenes), nor did he seek to embrace it (like the Sadducees). He did not advocate armed revolution (as did the Zealots). He simply sought to redeem culture wherever he found it (p. 157).”

Mystery Missing

“Mystery, reverence, and paradox are what are needed in our churches, not more information or steps. An appreciation of the majesty, vastness, goodness, and providence of our holy God would serve us better than yet another book on the Rapture (p. 119).”

“We are not huge fans of true mystery and paradox. We like mysteries that resolve themselves neatly at the end. We don't like tension; we like resolution. I we like the comfortable clarity of the Jesus of Suburbia over the ravenous wonder and fear the real Jesus brings (p. 124).”

“We don't like mystery because mystery forces us to trust and wait and be patient. Mystery is painful. Mystery and patience are certainly not the American way (p. 132).”

Movement vs. Institution

“God intended is church to be a movement guided and powered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the mission of Christ on the earth, which is to make disciples of all nations n to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth (p. 137-8).”

“The church has seen and still should be a revolutionary community attempting to subvert and redeem the culture around it (pp. 138-9).”

3 Essential Points of the Book

1. Our cultures desires for good baseball, good movies, good restaurants, good neighborhoods all have very little to do with becoming comfortable with the Savior and Author of the universe.
2. The church, being the people, has the job of redeeming our culture.
3. There is something great, awesome, bigger and overwhelming about being a follower of God. He has called us to participate in being his bride.

2 Points of Comparison with Other Author/Thinkers

1. Dorthy Sayers writes in her book, *The Diminished Church* about this same topic of the churches' inadequacy to accomplish much of anything if it serves to merely hold people's hands and suggest a menu for the next potluck. She is in agreement with Erre's points and I believe would enjoy his sermons and attending his church.
2. “God is certainly not tame” is a reoccurring theme for the writing of C. S. Lewis. There is something very uncomfortable about placing our trust, decisions, self merits, etc, in the hands of one so beyond our control. While some would see this as a sign of weakness, others recognize profound trust and love.

1 Life Lesson for My Life

I loved the book. Not only for its content. Not only for the honest style. Not only for a willingness to share the shortcomings of the author. Not only because I loved what he said and agree with. Mostly, because I have attended the church where Mike Erre teaches and leads and see his consistency. For 2 ½ years I have watched and scratched my head about many things that I have longed for but have seen lacking in the church. Rock Harbor has touched my life through its people. These are people hungry for the wild, untamed, mystical, transcendent, power God and care to love the community where they live in ways I have never seen before in the church. It is provoking and nurturing and wonderful. For several years i labored as a leader in a few "suburban" churches and i desperately want more now.

Another quote from the book that has been on my heart for weeks now is the statement Mike makes, "we regularly call people (the church) to serve within the church, but when do we tell them to go and serve the poor." This has been so fun to discuss with many friends and find out that some are ahead of me in this. I'm praying about visiting an aids clinic in Costa Mesa that I delivered a turkey dinner to at thanksgiving as part of a thanksgiving dinner donation project i signed up for at church. They weren't to sure what to do with the church folks bringing them food for their distribution group. It was clear that not often does the church come by to offer help. I hope they'll accept my help if i go back. The adventure of the movement of following Jesus ... continues.

Other Good Quotes

Suburban Jesus

“We are drawn to the Jesus of Suburbia – the tame, whitewashed, milquetoast Jesus who is primarily interested in our security and comfort and oblivious to the dangerous and wild Jesus of Nazareth who beckons us beyond the safety of our small lives. We must constantly guard against the counterfeit Jesus who pervades our culture and churches. The real one is far bigger and more dangerous than we realize (p. 3P).”

Someone wrote, “The American church has been educated far beyond its willingness to obey. The Jesus of Suburbia would have us believe that what we need is more doctrine – if people just knew their Bibles better, we would have stronger Christians. Perhaps. I think the real Jesus would call us to something far more dangerous: to actually live the truth we say we believe (p. 96).”

“The reason Christ has had diminishing influence on the church is because the church has accepted a diminished Christ (p. 192).”

Relationship with the Author

“We preach Christianity, but do we really preach Christ? We call people to serve the church, but do we call them to serve the poor? We teach them to know sound doctrine, but do we teach people to center their whole lives (and not just their intellectual knowledge) of him? Do we teach people to have a commitment to the Bible or to a relationship with its author (p. xii)?”

Weak Invitation

“We have turned the ruthless and demanding invitation of Jesus of Nazareth into a safe and weak invitation to follow the counterfeit Jesus of Suburbia? Jesus consistently and frequently warned his followers about the cost of being his disciple. Why don't we do the same thing today (p. 37).”

The Righteous Mission Christ

“Here's the crazy thing: Jesus told the Pharisees they were missing him because of their religiousness. Religion got in the way of finding and following Jesus Christ. They were so focused on doing the right things and avoiding the wrong things, keeping score and pronouncing judgment on others that they missed Jesus entirely (pp 43-4).”

Grace

“The religious system of the day taught that you had to be ceremonially clean in order to approach God. Jesus reversed this. He demonstrated that his kingdom was so “at hand” that you could approach God as you were and he made you clean. This was a revolution of grace! Look at those to whom Jesus ministered: the paralyzed, blind, lame, deaf, demon-possessed, Samaritans, Gentiles, Romans, women – anyone who was Am Ha-Eretz (dirty). Jesus was drawn to them and they to him (p. 68).”

“Since when is the church a place for people who are supposed to have it all together? When did it cease being a community for the screw-ups and the Am Ha-Eretz of today's society? Why do we feel that we have to have our addictions cured, our doubts answered, and our religious lives in order before we can come and fall at the feet of Jesus? When did the church become a place for those who aren't desperate and unclean (p. 72)?”

Care for Poor and Sick, p. 94

Sacred vs. Secular, pp. 98, 111

Legalism, p. 111

Addressing the Moral Objections, pp. 177-9

Natasha Harrington says

I enjoyed this book and found it enlightening. It was an easy read and truly eye opening.

Julie Clark says

This book had me nodding my head (in confession) the entire time. I read it in 2 days and plan to re-read it again. Can the world even see Jesus when they look at me? Who do they say that He is? If it is based on seeing my life, what kind of Jesus will they see?

From Publisher's Weekly:

"Compelling discussion of how the Christian church has lost sight of the revolutionary teaching and love of Jesus. "Much of the message of American Christianity presents Jesus as the purveyor of the American Dream," he says. American Christians, he claims, have reduced Jesus to a study of risk management; we want him to be "predictable and safe." Erre also uses the adjectives "insecure, threatened, naive, simplistic, mean and shortsighted" to describe many of today's churches. He lambastes our love of theology instead of Jesus, our contentment with "simply knowing about him instead of knowing him." While this protest continues in the vein of other recent books that take a hard look at Jesus and the church it offers a fresh look at how the American church must begin "demonstrating the message of Christ," not merely explaining it. After all, says Erre, "if you follow Jesus, you follow the most radical man who ever existed."

Bryan says

A well written book that makes some very good points regarding the various ways we have domesticated Jesus and his gospel. It is written at a popular level but is built upon some decent and sound theology so that his arguments are credible and convincing. There is some passion in the delivery, but it is based more in his own past shortcomings than an outward anger toward "worldly" Christians, so that the overall tone is not condemnatory (an impression one might falsely take from the title of the book). I'd definitely recommend it to anyone looking for a popular level book on an extremely important subject.

Patrick McMullen says

I think that The Jesus of Suburbia was a great read. It really opened my eyes up to the perspective on how we often sell out the true faith to the consumer substitute of today's society. We as, faithful people tend to mix in values that don't belong. Erre mentions in this book that this is called syncretism, which is a big mistake, that we need to change. Christianity has become "sugar-coated" he says. The book explains that the Christian church has lost track of revolutionary teachings and love for Jesus.

I think this was a great book to read. It had many valid points and made me think twice about how I was acting and how I was letting religion affect my life. I thought it was good in the sense that it questioned a lot of things we are doing today. Is our religion becoming a different watered-down version of what it once was? Are we losing track of what we have? It made me understand that I need to actively live out my relationship with Christ. But also I really didn't understand why Mike mentions that Christians in America are too educated,

Too Intellectual, and too personable, which i believe is wrong. We never know enough about Christianity. You can always learn more with love you are given. You can never be too personable with god. Its just impossible. Its when you start treating him like a friend when you have problems. Although there were a mix of emotions through this book it kept me reading, and wondering what he was gonna mention next.

I would recommend this book to anyone that is of the christian faith and is sick of this blan stereotypical relationship with god, and wants more. If your willing to listen, and think. You will like this book. Even if you don't believe what hes saying is right, you will still enjoy the insight and the bright new relationship with god.

Nancy Bandusky says

This book takes a look at what has become of the Jesus of the Bible as He has been slowly turned into the Jesus of Suburbia where comfort and protection are the priorities of his followers. With many believing that faith in Jesus is supposed to result in a trouble-free life, readers may be disappointed to learn that trials and tribulation are actually the rule of the day (even today) if one follows the Jesus of the Bible and joins His revolution.

The author touches on many topics including the concepts of "Christian" labels and where "Truth" can be found which are extremely relevant in today's society. Attempting to keep the "spiritual" separate from the "material" caused problems for the early church and it still does today, leading to New Gnosticism.

Despite finding the author's presentation interesting, I was bothered by the lack of any mention of the Holy Spirit and His impact (or lack thereof) on the church today. The author does list the Trinity in his church's doctrinal statements but he goes no further, not even mentioning the lack of anyone discussing, learning, relying on the third part of the Trinity today despite Jesus informing his followers after He left, the Comforter would come. (John 16:7)

Leila Hays says

The subtitle says it all.

If you're reading this, you probably know that I'm pretty open-minded and that I love to read about and discuss viewpoints with which I (sometimes vehemently) disagree. And I often recommend books that fit this description, so I don't want anyone to think that my failure to recommend this book has anything to do with my feelings about Mike's point of view (I know, I spoiled the ending. Read on anyway, please.)

I have two major problems with The Jesus of Suburbia. The first is that Mike argues that one cannot truly love, know, and "come to" Jesus unless one is the modern American equivalent of a leper or Roman tax collector. He is dead wrong. I have the privilege of knowing several people who have never come close to that, and they are some of the truest disciples of Jesus I have ever encountered. I consider it an insult to them and to myself (although I admit I am by no means that mature in my faith). It strikes me as the most craven form of judgement, precisely the opposite of the teachings of Jesus. I'll move on now, before I start writing nasty things.

The second major complaint (I have lots of little ones, but since I promise to keep things short, I'm just sharing the big two) is a characteristic of many books of this type, which is to claim to know what God wants. Mike says over and over (with the Bible passages for support) that we can never truly know or understand God. But he also writes repeatedly about what God wants us to do, also quoting from the Bible. He speaks with such authority, which just really drives me nuts. Which is it, Mike? I personally would not presume to preach to others about what God wants anyone else to do. Of course, there is a lot of guidance in the Bible, but not enough, in my opinion, to support the kinds of details and assertions in *The Jesus of Suburbia*.

The Holy Spirit guides us all differently. That's the beauty of faith. Now go find something else to read.

Leave It

L says

I want to drink bourbon and talk about faith with Mike Erre. He is refreshing, kind, direct, educated. The intent in this book is to encourage those who proclaim to follow Christ, to be impacted by His actual being...in them...overwhelming their humanity and moving to new heights. Stellar read.

Madison McQuary says

LOVED this book so much!

The whole book felt like a culmination of thoughts from many of my favorite books like "Radical" and "The Explicit Gospel" and I loved that!

I love Mike Erre's honesty in pointing out our cultures (and our) lack of getting to know the REAL Jesus, as the man who walked among sinners and came to earth to start a revolution!

Jesus of Suburbia addressed so many of the issues and questions I have about Christianity and modern religion today in such straightforward ways I was constantly left convicted, inspired, and agreeing with what I was reading.

This book is about reminding us of the radical life God has called us to live and the revolution Jesus started that we are meant to carry out!

Couldn't recommend it more!

Alaina Chatterley says

Excellent, easy read with thought provoking principles that make me think carefully about what it really means to be a Christian in action and being, not just name and religion.

Funny story, I read this book 75% of the way, underlining and writing in the margins, and then I left it on an

airplane :(Distraught over my lost journaling within its pages, I bought a second copy and marked it up similarly.

What I loved in this book: All things are spiritual, trusting God means more than doing what your religious culture says to, Jesus life turned everything upside down culturally and it might do that for us too when we TRULY follow him instead of the Christian norm, the real test of spiritual maturity is how we love, Jesus meets us where we are - we don't have to get cleaned up first, the Prodigal Son story is really about the righteous brother who stayed behind, the Pharisees have so so much in common with culturally religious (focus on outward behaviors)

Favorite quote: "Walking with Jesus (otherwise known as discipleship) becomes not a matter of learning to do a bunch of new religious things; rather, it means doing the things I have always done but doing them differently. I still eat, drink, work, play, drive, shop, and love, but I do those things from a new perspective. I thank God for all his gifts; knowing the Giver makes the gifts all the better. I learn to do things with excellence "in the name of the Lord Jesus," knowing he is with me at all times and is pleased when I offer my ordinary life to him for his glory. I being to pay attention, for the whole earth is bathed in God's glory, and I recognize there is nowhere I will be that he hasn't been first. Following Jesus becomes learning to recognize and worship him in the small avenues and adventures of real life."

I could say so much more about what I loved in this book. Note to self - go thumb through the underlines to remind yourself <3

Alma says

* Not done yet but what a great read so far.

For the first time I am teaching CFF/catechism in the fall. I had real reservations about taking on this task but knew this year would be critical in our eldest's faith. He is in sixth grade & has a better grasp of the bible and being Catholic more than I ever had. I also knew I would be forcing myself to address my own tough questions I've had about God, Christianity, and spirituality all my life.

At the same time I am excited to explore my faith with the youth. Who else is going to be more brutally honest than a class of 12 year olds?

I found this book at the library and while his discourse is nothing new to many of the reviewers, it's new to me. I hope it stays new.
