



Divine Commodity: Discovering a Faith Beyond Consumer Christianity

Skye Jethani

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Divine Commodity: Discovering a Faith Beyond Consumer Christianity

Skye Jethani

Divine Commodity: Discovering a Faith Beyond Consumer Christianity Skye Jethani

The challenge facing Christianity today is not a lack of motivation or resources, but a failure of imagination. A growing number of people are disturbed by the values exhibited by the contemporary church. Worship has become entertainment, the church has become a shopping mall, and God has become a consumable product. Many sense that something is wrong, but they cannot imagine an alternative way. The Divine Commodity finally articulates what so many have been feeling and offers hope for the future of a post-consumer Christianity. Through Scripture, history, engaging narrative, and the inspiring art of Vincent van Gogh, The Divine Commodity explores spiritual practices that liberate our imaginations to live as Christ's people in a consumer culture opposed to the values of his kingdom. Each chapter shows how our formation as consumers has distorted an element of our faith. For example, the way churches have become corporations and how branding makes us more focused on image than reality. It then energizes an alternative vision for those seeking a more meaningful faith. Before we can hope to live differently, we must have our minds released from consumerism's grip and captivated once again by Christ.

Divine Commodity: Discovering a Faith Beyond Consumer Christianity Details

Date : Published February 23rd 2009 by Zondervan (first published 2009)

ISBN : 9780310283751

Author : Skye Jethani

Format : Hardcover 192 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Religion, Christianity, Christian, Church

 [Download Divine Commodity: Discovering a Faith Beyond Consumer C ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Divine Commodity: Discovering a Faith Beyond Consumer ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Divine Commodity: Discovering a Faith Beyond Consumer Christianity Skye Jethani

From Reader Review Divine Commodity: Discovering a Faith Beyond Consumer Christianity for online ebook

Joshua D. says

I read this book shortly after it came out, and then read it again over the last few months with some guys from my church. Below is a review from when I first read the book:

In 'The Divine Commodity,' Skye Jethani analyzes the way that consumerism has crept (and sometimes shoved) its way into the church. Rather than standing as a kingdom witness against the age, the church all too often has simply reflected the culture, accomodating Christian faith with commercialism and consumerism. This syncretism, while making the church more palatable to some in our day, has cost the church its distinctiveness, and indeed some of the very qualities that make the church a visible sign of a new kingdom, a new order, a new way of life. In many cases, the church's adoption of market principles has cost it its very identity.

There are several books about the effects of consumerism on the church. What makes Jethani's book different, however, is its tone and approach. The temper of the book is not that of a jeremiad. Jethani avoids the pitfalls of the angry denunciator to which so many succumb. Most cultural critics, while often successful at rallying the troops, do little but annoy those not already convinced of their propositions. In contrast, 'The Divine Commodity,' while forceful and persuasive, is not abrasive, and therefore will gain a wider audience and perhaps will actually change the perspectives of some.

Jethani's book also is of a different quality in that his prescriptions for combating consumerism in the church are not aimed at top-down organizational changes. So many cultural critiques leave the reader with nothing to do but bicker and complain at the institutional church and the wickedness of those in authority. 'The Divine Commodity' focuses rather on personal disciplines -- silence, prayer, fasting, love, hospitality, and friendship -- as a means of loosening consumerism's grip on the individual reader. Only the most obtuse of readers could finish Jethani's book not thinking about their own complicity in the church's debacle. And Jethani offers plenty of encouragement of how to reverse this trend in your own life.

There is a lot that could be said about Jethani's specific analysis of consumerism's hold on the church (bigger is better, staging experiences, marketing the gospel, programs as the be-all-end-all of ministry, felt needs over missional service, customization versus community, etc), but I'll leave that for you to read yourself.

Perhaps the thing that makes this book most enjoyable is Jethani's use of anecdotes, both personal and historical. Jethani tells you much of his own life, his struggles and victories, throughout the book. The only character who appears more often is that of Vincent Van Gogh. Jethani masterfully uses the life of the artist to tie together themes throughout. Not only is this effective in illustrating points, the use of Van Gogh's story makes 'The Divine Commodity' a very interesting read.

This book recognizes that consuming is a fact of life, but that consumerism can rob your faith of its vitality and ultimately prevent the church from being "salt and light" before a watching world. Like Van Gogh before him, Jethani takes up the task of "re-imagining reality, representing reality by uncovering the truth that is not apparent to the naked eye." This, 'The Divine Commodity' does very well. I highly recommend it.

Melody says

I thought this book had some fresh insights. There were a few areas where I thought he was a little critical. He talked about theater and other artistic licenses that are used in church which he saw as commercialism. However, he uses Van Gogh's art to paint beautiful imagery. It seemed like a contradiction to be able to use one medium of art and frown upon another in attempting to connect with God authentically.

He also cast living in the suburbs as a product of being a consumer and that it caused a break down in community due to isolation. I have always lived in the suburbs and our neighbors have been wonderful friends, so this personally felt like this point of his was subjective and not completely fleshed out.

So, besides a few inconclusive arguments (and character assassinations of people like John Wanamaker), I thoroughly enjoyed Jethani's writing style and his book, overall.

Nick Woodall says

Skye did an outstanding job in this book. He takes Scripture, weaves it with a story about the painter Van Gogh, and delineates for us how the Church is really missing the boat in today's society. He "paints his picture" and then brings his book to a very simple, eloquent conclusion. This is a must-read for Christians.

Dave says

I love this book, on many levels. A wonderfully written book exposing how our current consumer culture has affected our relationships with each other, God, and our collective paradigm of Christianity. With a bonus parallel story woven in of Vincent Van Gogh's spiritual journey and divine inspiration behind his works. Which certainly resonates with me, and I'm sure will with a lot of others. Great book!

Rebekah says

Jethani offers a compelling look at how the modern Western church has adopted a consumerist approach to Christianity. Using Vincent Van Gogh's life as a vehicle, he examines today's church, its priorities and values, and its audience's expectations in light of historic and biblical realities. Ultimately, he challenges readers to re-evaluate their assumptions of how the body of Christ should approach ministry. Engaging, well-written, and worth the read.

Jenna says

Excellent book...written to be easily understood by a non-theologian like myself...engaging writing that kept me reading...thought-provoking, critical look at today's church without being judgmental...solid foundation in Christ...I've recommended it to all of our church leaders.

Levi says

I found this book in the bibliography of "The Prodigal Church" by Jared C. Wilson. Now having read it, I firmly believe that Wilson's book shamelessly raided "The Divine Commodity" for its best points and reasoning and repackaged it for its own use.

Written by Skye Jethani, "The Divine Commodity" is an eloquent, literate, readable manifesto in which the author writes against trend of churching being treated as a business venture rather than as a religious fellowship.

Jethani presents evidence that megachurch pastors such as Bill Hybels have popularized the idea that a church can rightly judge its success by the number of people warming pews.

The problem with this approach, says Jethani, is that the church was never meant to be an end in itself, but rather as the means by which people communicated with God in the company of fellow believers.

The result of the former attitude being adopted widely in the American evangelical church is disastrous.

Most modern churches now focus on how to give church attendees an "experience" which conforms to their individual religious tastes and preferences. Adherence to a specific doctrinal code to be reflected in preaching style and sacraments is made secondary to just putting on a good show.

Jethani eloquently discusses in each chapter of his book a portion of the life of Vincent van Gogh, who was himself a devout and charitable Christian who at one point attempted to become a minister. Van Gogh's unorthodox methods, however, caused friction between him and the institutional church, which he grew to intensely dislike.

Van Gogh's dedication to the poor and impoverished is contrasted by the author to the modern megachurch model of attracting wealthy and influential persons to the church. He goes so far as to compare this to the sorry state of the church in Corinth as detailed by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians.

If "The Divine Commodity" is the intellectual backbone and spiritual predecessor of "The Prodigal Church," then I couldn't recommend anything better on this subject. "The Prodigal Church" lacks the intellectual vigor of "The Divine Commodity," but it does have a sole advantage of having a slightly more contemporary understanding of the matter.

But aside from that and that alone, Jethani's book is without a doubt the superior read. I wholly recommend it.

Peter Swenson says

Easy to read, insightful look at the invasion of consumerism & marketing strategies into the modern American church. Skye Jethani is quickly becoming one of my favorite writers on modern Christianity.

Joe says

When I started reading this book, I was convinced that I'd love every word, however, by the time it was finished, I found myself largely unsatisfied with the author's conclusions.

On the positive, the book itself is a very enjoyable read. Jethani does a beautiful job blending together stories alongside the art and life of Vincent van Gogh. He also does an excellent job identifying the problem of our consumer culture and the damage that it's done to individual Christians as well as popular Christianity.

That being said, Jethani's conclusion that the solution to our current state is reclaiming disciplines like silence, prayer, love, friendship, fasting, and hospitality left me wanting, not because I don't believe those practices are bad, but because they focus on us and what we do, rather than Christ and what he does. In other words, it's the setup for a new (well, actually, a return to an old) form of personal piety that, despite it's best intentions, will become a way of identifying the "true believers" from those who are less than committed (a distinction our consumer culture also makes based on one's consumer choices).

Paul says

I should probably actually note how I rate books here because though I only rated this *** I really enjoyed it for me my ratings are:

- * Didn't finish and wouldn't recommend (probably will never see this here)
- ** Finished and didn't enjoy, would not recommend
- *** Finished and enjoyed mostly, would probably recommend to others with certain reservations
- **** Finished and highly enjoyed, would recommend with no reservations
- ***** Finished, enjoyed, would recommend and will likely read again myself within the next 2 years.

That being said I think Jethani brings up a lot of significant issues in this book. I was certainly motivated and challenged to think about how consumerism had effected my faith and the church as a whole. That being said the book had the tendency to read more as a research paper - he quoted a lot of authors I love and I found myself thinking - shouldn't I just go read their books? All in all this was informative if not overly insightful - it leads me to other books which I am excited about, most notably the works of Dallas Willard.

Adam says

Jethani has a way of making you think, of really challenging your conceived notions of church and God. I read With earlier in the year (on the recommendation of a friend) which introduced me to his work. I was looking forward to reading The Divine Commodity because of it. I found it engaging, and meaningful, and oddly similar to Henri Nouwen's The Return of the Prodigal Son (his use of Van Gogh reminded me of Nouwen's use of Rembrandt.)

Interestingly, I've read a few other books that focus on how our society is becoming more and more based in pleasure, not in duty, not in discipline or anything else (Jethani speaks greatly of reclaiming certain

disciplines). One was Neil Postman's classic, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, in which Postman asserts that our society was essentially turning into pure entertainment - mainly public discourse, education, and religion. Religion, of course, is expanding on significantly here. (Oddly, it was in Jethani's book *With* in which I first heard of Postman's book.) The other was *Whitebread Protestants*, by Daniel Sack, who discussed the development of the modern church in terms of "church socials."

Ultimately, though, Jethani says that the American church has turned into a product to be consumed, the destination itself and not a means of transportation to the destination. The Church has transformed into an enterprise instead of a community, of broken individuals, moving together to find God, to understand God, to seek communion with God. Pastors use books recommended by economists for growing businesses. Instead, Jethani encourages us to plant and water seeds, but not try to control the greatness of our impact, for we are not able to make the seed grow. Only God can do that.

He encourages us to reclaim our imaginations, our abilities to vision God in prayer and in wonder, and to re-instill that wonder. He encourages us to reclaim the silence, to find that wonder. He encourages us to find our identities in God, not in brands, to take up personal relationships and community (something increasingly rejected during the age of Social Media), to find the unity the church has long since promoted - not to be divided by class or race or anything else like that.

It boils down to finding the original God for who he is, fighting the Consumer Culture. He speaks of this in *With* considerably. God does not exist for my pleasure. I exist for his, I exist to live in community with him. Our goal here is to serve him, to live with him, and to plant seeds, not matter how small. It is not our vision to be fulfilled, but His.

I am culprit just as much as anyone else. I find it funny, though, when I see those articles talking about how to "bring people back to church these days." The answer, in those articles, never seems to be God. But the answer is God.

John says

Jethani has an excellent WORD for today's church. We are so consumer driven and he exposes it, even claiming that he, himself, is consumer oriented. His ability in expressing his deep thoughts on the matter is engaging and probing. In the epilogue he calls the church to disciplines like silence, prayer, fasting, love, hospitality, and friendship. This is a great wake-up call for those who seek to be followers of Jesus.

Mark says

An easy read book that will make you think about how our current pop culture and economic system have impacted our relationships and worship. Although you have an occasional hyperbole (Nike making profits from the death of a young man), Jethani's insights and logic paint a convincing argument for working to make the Church counter-cultural rather than going along with the culture.

Phil Whittall says

Before you even read the book you have to say it's pretty encouraging that it even exists. Not long ago a book on consumerism from a mainstream American publisher was a rare thing indeed, there still aren't many in existence and this one deserves to be near the top of the pile.

In nine chapters Jethani unpacks how consumerism has leaked into the church. American is at the forefront of a consumer society, its leading edges are all in America and American Christianity is at the forefront of consumer shaped religion. There are lessons to be learnt simply from the descriptions of the church that the author provides.

American Christianity continues to fascinate me, it is part car crash and part inspiration. Some of my best teachers are Christians birthed, taught, shaped and formed in the cradle of American Christendom. At the same time there is a side to the church there that I simply cannot grasp or comprehend, I have no idea how this monstrosity came to be and how it relates to the Christ I follow. Fortunately that's not my problem to solve and our God is a gracious God.

In response to this monstrous creation birthed by the illegitimate union of the church and the shopping mall, Jethani uses the life and work of Vincent Van Gogh to help us rediscover the spiritual disciplines of silence, prayer, love, friendship, fasting and hospitality that have both stood the test of time and served the church well as gifts from God.

The use of Van Gogh is interesting and certainly served as a useful reminder of both the genius and the spiritual zeal of the Dutch artist, although I'm not sure how successful it always was as a bridge between the poison and the antidote.

Jethani understands the power of consumerism well and sees how pervasive its influence is on the American church, his insights hit the mark time and time again and his journalist background shows through. After such a clear diagnosis I wanted a sharper response, I wanted the battle lines drawn more clearly, the solution more boldly proclaimed but, perhaps he's right, that to do so would have fallen into the trap of offering another option, another choice to be consumed if you feel like it or not if you don't.

There are plenty of ways in which the church context differs from the UK to the US but there are more than enough similarities as well for this to be a useful and helpful book for the discerning reader. If you want to see the logical outcome of consumer Christianity read this, if you want to know the traps that await us if we follow that path read this, if you want encouragement that consumerism in the church and in us can be defeated read this. If you want to know that an alternative vision exists read this. Highly recommended.

Matt says

I knew this book would be good, Skye is an excellent analyst and writer. but I did not expect this to be beautiful. This is the best and most constructive response to christianity and consumerism that I have read.
