

stand.

KARL MARTIN



Muddy
Pearl

First published in 2013 by
Muddy Pearl, Edinburgh, Scotland.
www.muddypearl.com
books@muddypearl.com

© Karl Martin 2013

Karl Martin has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988 to be identified as the author of this work.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews or articles.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version Anglicised copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 Biblica, formerly International Bible Society. Used by Permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, an Hachette UK company.
All rights reserved.
NIV is a registered trademark of Biblica.
UK trademark number 1448790.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation.
Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188.
All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are taken from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), published by HarperCollins Publishers, copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.
Used by permission.
All rights reserved.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 1 910012 03 1

Typeset by Waverley Typesetters, Warham
Printed in Great Britain by Bell & Bain Ltd, Glasgow

Contents

<i>Foreword</i> by Pete Greig	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>Introduction</i>	xv
Stand In	
1. True You	3
2. Grow Your Own Jesus	15
Stand Up, Stand For	
3. My Name is Son	33
4. God at Hand	51
5. Not Yet Now	70
6. That's My Boy	81
Stand Firm, Stand Free	
7. Enemy of the State	91
8. Military Intelligence	106
9. Mother Mugging	123
10. Mender Forever	135

Stand out, Stand by

11.	Two Ball Screwball	149
12.	Babel Revisited	156
13.	Doing It is Doing It	171
14.	Keep Low	180

Stand Back

15.	YOLO	193
-----	------	-----

Foreword

The first time I stayed at his house, Karl Martin was carrying around a gnarly, old, leather shoulder bag. It went everywhere with him; carried his laptop, Bible, journal, bundles of paper. That bag came straight out of the 1930s. It had a moss green lining, was small enough to tuck under his arm, big enough for an overnighter, and manly enough not to be mistaken for a lady's handbag. I liked it. In fact I'd been looking for one just like it online, I'd visited specialist stores, and had even emailed a leatherworker in Wisconsin for a quote.

'Nice bag', I said.

'You like it?'

'Where did you get it?'

'Scottish company. Ethically sourced. Hand-stitched . . . Here.'

Without warning Karl suddenly inverted the bag. A small avalanche of papers fell out and then with a thud his old dog-eared Bible did the splits onto the table too. 'Have it', he grinned.

I stammered my protest but he just wouldn't listen.

'Mate, it'll give me an excuse to get a new one.'

The next time I saw Karl he was carrying his stuff around in a plastic carrier bag, and I was carrying mine in a gnarly, old leather number with moss green lining.

Karl didn't give me that bag on the off chance that I would one day blow his cover in the foreword to a book. He did it

privately and impulsively because he's genuinely kind and a sacrificial.

I tell you this partly because the private lives of leaders matter, and partly because this book reads like a compelling extension of that one simple exchange. It's generous, authentic and challenging. Karl doesn't do trivial pursuits. He's a big-hearted, big-fisted, big picture kind of man, which is another way of saying that he's a leader. At a time when an entire generation is questioning Christianity, Karl fills his home with students and tells them they can change the world. Right now he's busy turning one of the bigger venues in Edinburgh into a centre for prayer, mission, enterprise and mercy. And in a nation where pastors are often afraid to pioneer, Karl is unashamedly planning to start loads of new congregations in every major city. Why? Because most people in those cities don't yet know Jesus, and most Christians in most churches don't yet know Jesus' plans for their lives.



A publisher once told me that Christians don't really read books on discipleship any more. This saddens me because Christ's whole message was a call to follow. Apparently we want books that make us feel nice. Pretty books. Books by famous authors. And sensationalised novels about the End Times, based on very dodgy theology. Well, *Stand* is unapologetically and defiantly an ancient, urgent call to Christian discipleship. And the fact that you are about to read it is significant. It shows that God is stirring something unusual in your heart – a longing for the kind of encounter with God that changes everything and the kind of obedience that changes the world. I believe that the Holy Spirit has placed this desire in you precisely because he plans to fulfil it. He's not setting you up to fail. He's brought you to this moment and this book in order to redefine normality and to propel you out on new adventures of faith.

It's time for this generation to take a stand for Jesus. To pray like it all depends on God, and to live like it all depends on us.

I don't know what that will look like for you – a new courage, a new direction, a new willingness to sacrifice everything for Jesus. *Stand* could well cost you big things like your time, your ambition, and your money, but also the little things of life, like the old leather bag, sitting beside me as I type.

Pete Greig
Guildford 2013

2.

GROW YOUR OWN JESUS

'But what about all the miracles? The healings? Raising people from the dead? Doesn't that prove that Jesus was God? You know, more than human?'

'No, it proves that Jesus is truly human.'

'What?'

The Shack, William P Young (2007)



He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers of rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Colossians 1:15–18

A family friend came back from a trip to the USA and brought us a present. It was a 'Grow Your Own Jesus'. Awesome! The idea is that you stick him in a glass of water and overnight he grows to about six times his original size. We thought it was a fun present and we rushed down each morning to see how big Jesus was. And indeed our Jesus grew. Then he shrank again. Jesus made us laugh.

You should get one.

Maybe you already have one? Many of us do. We do try to grow our own Jesuses. We take an idea of Jesus and try to conform, or reform it, into an image that we are comfortable with. The kind of image that suits us. Maybe we like the idea of 'Soft Jesus', so we feminise him, or camp him up, and keep him on a shelf in the kitchen. Or maybe we prefer the other extreme and pump him up to be 'Cage Fighter Jesus'.

But Jesus is not a sponge. Or a fluffy toy. He may not even have a six pack. Jesus *is*. He simply is. He is who he is. In his own words, he is the *I AM*.

Jesus. Do you know him? The real Jesus? Truly?

Sometimes I ask myself. I've spent half a lifetime and a career and so much energy ... actually I am a professional in introducing people to Jesus. But do I have Jesus down? Can you ever? Or is that the problem? Take a minute to think about it.

How do you see Jesus? Friend, brother, lord, saviour, king, priest, God? What is your picture of Jesus?

I asked myself that question. It seemed only fair, if I was to ask you, that I try and answer it first. I found it hard. My response was confusing.

See Jesus is my friend and companion – but he also happens to be the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He comforts me and disturbs me in equal measure. He makes me uncomfortably comfortable and leaves me feeling secure and expectant. He gives me rest and keeps me on my toes. I love that he is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and that he has all power for me. I love that

he is the Lamb of God who was slain for me. To me he is extreme power and extreme grace and everything in between. He is everything. Without him I am nothing. With him suddenly all things are possible. I love that he takes hold of me and I reach out to take hold of him. Sometimes I catch him. But there is always more. And it is always disturbing comfort. It is intimacy and awe.

But I have always struggled with the 'Jesus is my boyfriend' idea. I hate worship songs that encourage me to think that he's somehow my lover. If that's your bag, that's fine, but it doesn't work for me. For me, Jesus is my older brother, the one who has gone before me, the one who paves the way for me, the one who sticks up for me. He is the adventurer, leader, and the one who calls me on and calls me up and draws me in. He protects me. He gives me confidence. Perhaps because I never had an older brother – I had to pave the way myself. But Jesus has my back, he's at my right hand, he's my authority, my card of reference. He's the one who calls me to battle, and fights on my behalf. He's the one who calls me to rest, and gives me confidence to do so. When I don't know the way to turn, he's there. When I've never been this way before, he has.

In all the training I've done, I'm not sure that anyone ever taught me about the person of Jesus. I studied a number of views and pictures of Jesus, but either I was never taught well or I never engaged properly with the importance of who I understood Jesus to be. And that's crucial.

Because if Jesus is supposed to grow in you, you'd better work out what that looks like.

You can know as much as you like but you'll never completely know Jesus, you'll never come to the end of knowing Jesus, of what there is to know and ways of knowing him. It's all about Jesus. The vision is Jesus, the strategic plan is Jesus, the origin is Jesus, the goal is Jesus.

So. Luke 4. New Testament Nazareth. Jesus was home for the weekend. He went to the synagogue. And when he stood up to

read, 'All spoke well of him and the gracious words that came from his lips.' 'Isn't this Joseph's son?' (You can almost hear them saying 'How he's grown!') But instead of accepting their faintly patronising praise, instead of allowing small-town Nazareth to own him, Jesus speaks out. He challenges them, he tells them what they are really thinking. He infuriates them to the extent that they want to kill him.

Think about it. In the course of a short sermon Jesus' own childhood neighbours and friends turn from loving his gracious words to physically trying to kill him. That must have been some sermon.

Jesus always, always provokes a reaction. Throughout the gospels, people are astonished, amazed, they fall down at his feet, they run from his whip, they climb trees to catch a glimpse of him, they gnash their teeth at him, they give up everything to follow him. Which, if you think about it for just a minute, is hard to imagine happening today, even in the most happening of high streets, even to the most popular of celebrities. And no-one, not one of them, can make Jesus do what they want him to do, or be what they want him to be.

Jesus is who he is.

Jesus is who he is in all his authority and in all his foot-washing servanthood and in all his sacrifice and in all his submission and in all his righteous anger. We can't tame him, we can't domesticate him, and we shouldn't diminish or emasculate him.

We can only *try* to know him. To become like little children and somehow or other get our minds and our hearts and our souls around who he might possibly be. To allow him to disturb us. To unsettle us. To stir us with his love, his grace, his compassion, his forgiveness and his truth. To allow him to know us. And to grow in us.

Jesus is. And he *is* in you. And me. And he needs to grow. You don't get to grow your own Jesus. He, the real Jesus, needs to grow in you.

The real Jesus.

JESUS EXPOSED

So Jesus shows up on our planet. Walking and talking and loving and healing. And telling stories. And he himself walks into a story that started with creation and isn't finished yet. It's a familiar story, one that the crowd knew very well, but let me remind us ...

- First, there's the story of *Creation*. God said 'Let there be light' and there was light, and God saw that the light was good. A story that defined purpose. In a garden. In this world. A story that spoke of roles and identity and work and family and love and creativity.
- Next up, the *Exodus* story. Egypt and plagues and God's call to 'Let my people go'. Splitting seas and manna and quails. A story of rebellion, a story of a journey, a story of freedom.
- And then, *Exile*. By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. A story of return and restoration. The return to a promised land. The return to relationship.
- Finally, the *Priestly* story. A story that tries to make sense of lambs under arms, queues in Jerusalem and blood, lots of blood. A story of sacrifices and atonement, pigeons and doves. The brokering of a transaction. The desperate wait for the Messiah.

This is the context, these are the stories. Stories pregnant with expectation, brimming full of hope. The prophets say he's coming. The people hope he's coming. At last, the wild man of the desert cries, 'He's come. He is among us!' And like an unpinned hand grenade, Jesus hurls himself, exploding into this world of stories, this world of law and of prophecies. And he says, 'It's all about me. Everything has been heading towards me, all the stories of our world, the creation story, the exile story and the returning, the priestly story and all

the blood and sacrifice – it's all about me. I am the Creator and Sustainer. I am the Redeemer. I am the Restorer. I am the Saviour of the world. I didn't come to destroy these stories. I came to fulfil these stories. It's all about me.'

He's not abolishing the law, he's not contradicting the prophets. He's fulfilling them.

Jesus makes sense of the stories that have come before. Stories that find their conclusion, their meaning, and their validity in him. It was through him that all things were created, so he calms storms with a word and feeds thousands on a boy's fish supper. He stamps on the serpent's head at the gates of Eden as he straightens the back of a doubled up daughter of Abraham. The blood daubed on the doorposts is his, freedom from slavery is from him. The stories all point to him, they are all about him.

It is all about him.

HIS NAME IS ...

This Jesus has many names. And his names are remarkable.

He is called the Christ, which means 'the anointed one of God'. In prophetic writings he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. He's described as the Lily of the Valley and the Bright Morning Star. He is beautiful. He is said to be the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and at the same time the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In other words he can do absolutely anything because he has all power and what he has chosen to do is to take his supreme competence and give his life. He is everything.

Jesus is the Bread of Life and the one who gives us living water. He is the Great Physician. The blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead are raised. He is the Good Shepherd and the Friend of Sinners. He is the Lord and we worship him. He is the Bridegroom and we wait for him. He is the Master and he calls us friends.

Jesus describes himself as the Alpha and the Omega. The first and the last, the beginning and the end. He is the capstone,

the gate, the doorway, he is what it is all founded on, and the entrance to life.

One of my favourite descriptions of Jesus comes from Paul. Paul says Jesus is the image of the invisible God. He is the likeness, the manifestation of the God that previously could not be seen. He is the firstborn, the owner, the ranking one. He is creator of all things, of humming birds and wild orchids, of snow leopards and Hebridean sunsets. And of human beings, conceived in Jesus' head and heart and created by the word of his mouth. He created the universe and holds it, so if he takes his finger off the pulse it collapses, implodes, ceases to be. Because in him all things hold together. And Jesus is the head of the church – get this – the church, my church, your church – in *everything* he has the supremacy. (Colossians 1:15–18)

When Paul says 'over everything' he's not messing around. Try, just for a moment, to get your head around what it means to be head over all things. It means that he is authoritative and has conscious active rule over all history, all human beings, all demonic powers, all disease, all disability, all nature, whether hurricanes, volcanoes, flooding, earthquakes, global warming, all businesses, all credit crunches, all healthcare, all avian flu, all sports, all elections, all computers, all military might, all governments, all religions, all culture – we only get to create culture because we are the King's kids – all universities, all stars, all galaxies, all molecules, all atoms, all atomic particles and ten thousand things no man or woman has yet discovered. Right now. Jesus rules over everything. Conscious, active, authoritative rulership.

And this is the Jesus who lives in us. The very same. The very same who needs to grow in us. Being one with Jesus is going to change everything.

Jesus in you is going to change everything. If you let him. Stop for a moment and take that in.

You are in Christ.

BE ME

Since, then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Colossians 3:1–4

This intriguing verse amplifies Jesus' commission in John 20. There, Jesus passes his mandate to his disciples and says 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you' (John 20:21). He breathes on them and they receive the Holy Spirit. He gives to them his authority. Same calling, same anointing, same style, same authority. Same Spirit. Jesus is saying to the disciples *Go, and be me*. Your life is now hidden with Christ in God!

He says the same to us today. We are disciples. We get to carry God's Great Story on. This is huge. The potential and opportunity is massive!

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

John 14:12

Can we really do things that are even greater than Jesus did on earth? Jesus says we can.

You may be thinking, 'Jesus is God, I am not. How can I be like him? I can only hope to try to be like him.' There is no denying the divinity of Jesus. He was fully God and he was fully man. He didn't come with armies and fanfares as the Jews longed he would. Jesus chose to operate out of a veiled divinity. Jesus,

*Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped*

*but he made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant.*

Philippians 2:6, 7 (NIV 1984)

Jesus *chose* to operate on earth primarily out of his humanity. When he healed people, and when he dealt with the demonic, he did so as a human. He knew the key to spiritual power. He knew it was listening to the Father, submitting to the Father's voice and heart, and doing so in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus clearly submits to the Father: 'For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it' (John 12:49). And Jesus operates in the power of the Spirit: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me" (Luke 4:18).

Listen, we are not being called to an impossible task. We are being invited into a deeper unity with Jesus. We are asked only to operate as he did in submission to Father God, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Being one with Jesus doesn't simply mean that we share in his glory and his suffering. It means we share all the beauty of his complete humanity.

Those of us who have trusted Jesus and follow him have almost certainly resolved in our minds any intellectual or theological debates about his divinity. Perhaps however we have not fully engaged with, or squared in our thinking, the truth and implications and consequences of him being human. It might even be that this is one of the most significant issues of our age.

TAKING YOUR CALLING A LITTLE DEEPER

The New Testament shows Jesus as human in his actions, in his emotions and in his needs. He was hungry, he became tired, he wept. But it goes deeper than that. His humanity is our humanity – exactly the same.

Jesus is not pretending to be human any more than he is pretending to be God. ‘The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us’ (John 1:14). The use of the word ‘became’ is highly significant. And, ‘it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters’ (Hebrews 2:17 NLT).

In experiencing humanity and temptation, every bit as real as ours, Jesus lived totally and consistently in obedience to the Father and in the power of the Spirit. He was ‘tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin’ (Hebrews 4:15). He modelled true humanity. Humanity as God intends us to be in the here and now.

We assume we know what it is like to be human: its limitations, its failings. And yet, as the Nicene Creed puts it, the only Son of God ‘became incarnate . . . and was made man.’ So Jesus defines what true humanity was and is intended to be.

‘Apart from Christ we know neither what our life, nor our death is; we do not know what God is, nor what we ourselves are.’ Blaise Pascal (Pensees 7).

Jesus is supposed to grow in you – his power, his character, his nature his style. Simple – but not simple.

GROWING THE JESUS IN YOU

So what does it look like, this Jesus life, this Jesus stand?

Well, different. See, Jesus’ way is different, opposite, *counter* to our way. His way is counter cultural and it has become counter intuitive. In his economy, everything appears upside down. In reality it is right side up. Our experience tells us that his way is difficult, road-blocked, gridlocked and impassable, impossible. Everything appears to militate against our ability to become truly like him. To become truly ourselves.

But. Jesus beckons us on. Through. Up. Over.

Matthew 5. Jesus sits down on a hillside and starts to talk about his kingdom. He describes what it looks like to follow him. And what he says turns everything on its head.

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’

Those listening to Jesus are farmers and fishermen, free men and slaves. They are dependent, they depend on the weather, on the political climate, on their bodies staying healthy, on each other, on God. They can't rely on themselves.

Our culture is about self. It is built on self-help and self-reliance. We applaud self-made men and women. We worship competence and independence. We believe we can do it on our own. Without help from others. Without help from God. Without Jesus. Yet we have been programmed for dependence. We are designed to rely on God and worship him. So: blessed are the reliant and the dependent. Blessed are those who know they need God, who depend on him, every day and every hour. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

What will it look like as Jesus grows in us? As we stand in him? We will rely on God more and more. And he is reliable, he is dependable and all the resources of heaven will be ours.

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted’

Jesus mourns over those who are far from God, just as he wept over Jerusalem and longed to gather her to him ‘as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings’ (Luke 13:34).

As Jesus grows in us, our hearts will break for the lost, for the things that break the Father's heart. When we are far from Jesus it is easy to put things out of our minds, and not let them affect us. And yet when we come to Jesus he gives us a new heart, a heart of flesh, which mourns. As Jesus grows in us, we will mourn. Over poverty, injustice, abuse, families ripped apart, war and inequality. Our hearts will break over the sin in our lives – sin that distances us from the God who loves us. And as we mourn we will know the comfort of the Father.

‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth’

Bizarre. Those who don't want to inherit the earth get it all. This is genius. It flies in the face of the prevailing wind of our

culture. Our world says: ‘Look out for number one’, and then we do. Our world says: ‘We have rights’, and so we want them. But we don’t want responsibilities. Our world says: ‘Blessed are the social climbers, the go-getters, the conquerors’, but somehow it doesn’t work. It’s never enough. Our world cannot satisfy us.

As Jesus grows in us we will become meek – not so much a Moses-sandaled meekness, but something inherently powerful, something brought utterly under control. A wild stallion broken in.

It is not a passive meekness. It is not a kind of niceness, not about not wanting to be any trouble to anyone, not about apologising for being there or being happy with whatever anyone else wants. It’s not a British middle-class meekness. Jesus’ example was not a weak meekness – he constantly confronted the religious leaders, flouting their religious laws and turning over tables. There are things we can stand up to and say no to. But Jesus also consistently talks about selling all you have, giving to the poor, turning the other cheek, losing your life to find it. And his example is obedience unto death.

No, this meekness is an active laying down of our lives, a relentless reaching out for God, and not settling for anything less. This meekness is something strong and powerful. When Jesus grows in you, you will stand strong.

**‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled’**

We often settle for the wrong things. Like fast food – preferably high in fat and ladled with sugar. It’s convenient and tastes good. And yet it never satisfies. It invariably leaves you with a fatty aftertaste and still hungry. It is the same in the rest of life: we settle for the quick fix, the easy solution, and the compromise, which gets us by. But we ache for something more.

Deep down, you hunger for right, and so do I. And we know that Jesus is right, that Jesus in you is predisposed to provoke right-ness, righteousness. But what does that mean, this word

‘righteousness’? What does it mean to ‘seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness’ (Matthew 6:33, ESV)? What does it look like?

A better translation could be ‘seek first the kingship of Jesus and his restorative justice’. Righteousness is not first about the morality of your heart and your actions. It is first about your participation in the Father’s restoration plan, which will then, in his time and in his way, result in a changed heart and changed action.

Maybe it means what we sometimes call ‘making a difference’. Maybe it is something to do with ‘doing the right thing’, or ‘not looking the other way’, or ‘living worthwhile lives’. Maybe it was something of Jesus’ righteousness that provoked William Booth to pour his life out working to support the urban poor. Perhaps it was righteousness that provoked Jackie Pullinger to pour hers out in Hong Kong helping the addicts in the Walled City there. Maybe it provoked Cathy to leave her job as a high powered IT consultant for Heineken and establish a business teaching homeless people a skill and a living, baking cakes for local establishments and selling them. Maybe it provokes you to do something. I don’t know.

What I do know for certain is that as Jesus grows in us, he makes us hungry, but not hungry for junk. We will hunger for doing the right thing, for his restorative justice, for making a difference. And, as Jesus grows in us, we will be filled. Our junk is replaced, again and again, with his *right-ness*, with his righteousness.

‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy’

Mercy is at the core, in the very DNA of the Godhead. The Godhead is merciful and operates out of mercy, on our behalf. So, as we pursue Jesus and oneness with him, we too will increasingly operate out of mercy. We will love forgiveness and we will delight in giving others the grace that they do not deserve.

We will no longer look out for number one, because we will prefer to make everyone else number one. We will find contentment in the second seat. We will find ourselves drawn

to those who have not, and to those who are hopeless. And God loves it!

**‘Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God’**

Our hearts can be drawn to so many things. We love new, shiny stuff, and our magazines and screens are filled with beautiful people. Designer accessories carried by the carefully designed. But it is superficial. Our society is obsessed with what’s on the outside. It infests our culture and it gets hold of our hearts like a parasite. We are captured by what we see. We judge on appearances. We become distracted by and obsessed with what we look like, what we have, what’s on the surface, when God cares so much more for what’s below – what’s *in*.

The love of stuff – shiny stuff, new stuff, stuff to make me look good – is not the Jesus way. It will not make our hearts clean and shiny and new. It will tarnish and pollute them. And it will never satisfy.

As you stand close to Jesus, as Jesus grows in you, so does truth and loyalty, purity of speech, honesty and integrity, righteousness. It becomes natural. At the same time, as Jesus grows in you, it becomes hard for lies to live with you, for disloyalty to be part of you, for dishonesty to have any part in your life.

This is the outward working, the visual expression of the inner holiness that is about proximity to Jesus. This is what it looks like for Jesus to grow in you.

The Jesus kingdom goes so much deeper. Here, it is not clean hands that Jesus pronounces as blessed, but a pure heart. It’s truly rich and you’ll want more and more of it. And you can have more and more of it!

And those who seek to go deeper with God will be purified inside and out. They will see God. They will actually see God: see his face, the reward of prophets, like Moses and Elijah. When Moses came out from meeting God his face was radiant, literally shining (Exodus 34:29)! How much cooler than all our shiny stuff will that be!

**‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called
sons of God’**

God is a peacemaker. He is not a warmonger. He is involved. And Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Jesus calls us to get involved. To mediate. To reconcile.

**‘Blessed are those who are persecuted because of
righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’**

Sometimes, as Jesus grows in us, and we start to act in the right way, it shows. It stands out. Sometimes he actually asks us to stand out, to stand up for what is right. It might be supporting a colleague at work who is being given a hard time, or refusing to go along with a lie. It is rarely popular and never easy. It might cost us popularity, or promotion. It might cost us our job. And we might not get it back, not in this lifetime. But we gain the kingdom of heaven itself.

People persecute those who are different. Perhaps some of the time we are not different enough – not meek enough, not passionate enough, not loving enough, not one with Christ enough – to be worth persecuting just yet. But we could be.

Bring on difference.

Bring on persecution.

Bring on unity.



I have three brothers. Reuben, Alex and James.

James loves action, speed and adventure. He loves to wind me up and he loves his motorbike. It’s a big motorbike.

James shows up at my house and offers to take me for a ride – just for a bit. After a mile or so, I’m scared. Really scared. But you don’t tell your younger brother you’re scared. We’ve nearly

come off more than once. Each corner I sit upright, poker straight, rigid as a board. But James is cool. James is calm. James is completely in control. At the first set of lights he turns to me and says firmly, ‘When I lean – you lean!’

I learn to lean. I learn to trust. It’s an incredible ride.

Allow Jesus to grow in you. His power, his adventure, his humility, his style, his kingdom. Jesus on the front – you on the back. Complete co-operation. He leans, you lean.

SO:

Jesus is the first disciple. Ever thought about that? It’s not just that I am his disciple but he is the model, exemplar disciple. I am invited to walk in his shadow to represent with ever increasing skill his commission and his likeness.

Why don’t you commit yourself to re-reading one of the gospels? (I know you have read them before and think you know them pretty well, but humour me!) This time read it through the filter of ‘That’s how I’m supposed to live, that’s what I’m supposed to do, that’s who I’m supposed to be.’

As you read about Jesus, watch and see what he does, listen to his words and hear him. Ask yourself how this translates into your world, your life, your encounters today and tomorrow and this week.

You might also like to read:

The Jesus I never knew, Philip Yancey (Zondervan 1995)

The Gospel according to Jesus, Chris Seay (Thomas Nelson 2010)