



*Would you publish
Jesus?*

by Isaac Phiri

You Did Not Publish Me

If Jesus were in the world today, and was an author, what would He write about? And, would He get published?

From what we know of Jesus, it is safe to say that most of His writing would be about love for God, for neighbors, for enemies. Jesus would want His readers to understand God's love for humanity—that He became one of them and died in their stead. This simple but profound truth is often lost in contemporary Christian publishing.

Jesus would also want to write books that stir a love for God in our hearts. Jesus would want readers to develop a greater passion for God—to be in His presence more, to worship Him more, to enjoy His Word more, to serve Him more. Clearly, this quality of spirituality lacks in most of our lives.

Love for neighbors

Jesus' books would also challenge readers to love others—their neighbors. He would not be a people-pleasing author. He would make readers uncomfortable by His definition of neighbor—not a selected inner circle but one including even those we know (and love) the least. The homeless. The sickly. The poor. The lonely. Those who are different from us in culture, race, ethnicity, social status, and religion. Jesus' books would expose our prejudices.

Love for enemies

You are reading this in September. In the U.S.A., September 11 is remembered as the day when enemies caused much death and destruction. The world responds to these circumstances by calling for the Old Testament's eye-for-eye justice. Vengeance is the norm.

What would Jesus' line of books say about how we should live in these times? You guessed it—forgive and love your enemies. I can imagine Jesus appearing on a television program to answer a series of questions about His books.

“What do you say about those who fly passenger planes into buildings?” Love and forgive. “What of those who plant explosives and kill us?” Love and forgive. “What of those who drop bombs on our cities?” Love and forgive. “What of the religious fanatics who set trains and our homes on fire?” Love and forgive. “What of those who cut off our limbs?” Love and forgive. “What of those who plunder our national resources, leaving us in abject poverty?” Love and forgive. “What about those who treat us badly because of race, ethnicity, gender, nationality?” Love and forgive. “What about those who abuse our children?” Love and forgive.

At this point I imagine the interviewer would turn to a learned Latin- and Greek-speaking seminary professor to respond to Jesus' ideas. “He must be from out of this world. Only God can do what this man says,” he contends. The interviewer turns back to Jesus for a response. “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus smiles.

You did not publish me

Sadly, if Jesus wanted a publisher, many—myself included—would turn Him down. My reasons for rejecting Him would be valid. Jesus has no credentials. He is a first time author. He is a Palestinian Jew who once fled to Egypt to elude authorities. He has no constituency to market to; His followers are a band of poor fishermen, former prostitutes and dubious tax agents. To make things worse, His ideas are offensive to many. He is not the kind of author any self-respecting Christian publishing house wants.

In the Gospels, Jesus tells of how at the end of time, we will stand before Him and give an account. He will say things like “I was hungry and you did not feed me.” If our books lack His authentic message of love, He could turn to us Christian publishers and say, “You did not publish Me.” ♦