



Jesus Outside the Lines

a way forward for those
who are tired of taking sides

By: Scott Sauls

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Whether the issue of the day on Twitter, Facebook, or cable news is our sexuality, political divides, or the perceived conflict between faith and science, today's media pushes each one of us into a frustrating clash between two opposing sides. Polarizing, us-against-them discussions divide us and distract us from thinking clearly and communicating lovingly with others. Scott Sauls, like many of us, is weary of the bickering and is seeking a way of truth and beauty through the conflicts. *Jesus Outside the Lines* presents Jesus as this way. Scott shows us how the words and actions of Jesus reveal a response that does not perpetuate the destructive fray. Jesus offers us a way forward - away from harshness, caricatures and stereotypes. In *Jesus Outside the Lines*, you will experience a fresh perspective of Jesus, who will not (and should not) fit into the sides.

My Synopsis:

Powerful and thought provoking. As someone who came to faith later in life, I often have struggled to separate my current self from my old self from a relational standpoint. I've voluntarily thrust myself into a new world but am a continuing work in progress on maturing in my faith. It's not my faith that wavers, but my thoughts and attitudes about "how I'm supposed to behave", knowing this - I haven't always lived up to the expectations. A great read for those who are curious how to live out their faith in today's society.

Jesus Outside the Lines

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p. xvii **Introduction**

p. xvii You can safely assume that you've created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do. – Ann Lamont

p. xviii Tolerance isn't about not having beliefs. It's about how your beliefs lead you to treat people who disagree with you. – Tim Keller

p. xx When the grace of Jesus sinks in, we will be among the least offended and most loving people in the world.

p. xxi Christians from differing perspectives can *learn* and *mature* as they listen humbly and carefully to one another.

p. xxii The more we move outside the lines of our own traditions and cultures, the more we will also be moving toward Jesus.

p. xxiii Jesus gave so much of his time, attention, and love to people who did not side with him.

p. xxv What matters more to us – that we successfully put others in their place, or that we are known to love well?

p. xxv Truth and love *must* go together.

p. xxvii Are you ready to move away from polarizing conversation and toward Jesus and your neighbor? It's a journey that Jesus invites us to embark upon. It's a journey outside the lines.

p. 1 **Part One: Jesus Outside the Lines of My Christian Tribe**

p. 3 **Red State or Blue State?**

p. 4 ...the longer it takes people to figure out where we stand on politics, in all likelihood the more faithfully we are preaching Jesus.

p. 6 The question, then, is not whether Jesus is on our side but whether we are on His. This is the appropriate question not only for politics and government but also every other concern.

p. 6 Our loyalty to Jesus and His kingdom must always exceed our loyalty to an earthly agenda, whether political or otherwise.

p. 7 We should feel "at home" with people who share our faith but not our politics even more than we do with people who share our politics but not our faith.

p. 8 ...politicians today often use the same strategies that Jesus' accusers and Pilate employed: misuse of power and manipulation of truth.

p. 8 ...in worldly politics, when conscience and the crowd are at odds with one another, the crowd always wins.

p. 11 Partisans inflate the best features of their party while inflating the worst features, real or contrived, of the other party.

p. 15 ...Christianity always flourishes most as a life-giving minority, not as a powerful majority.

p. 16 When those in power made Christianity the state religion, the church began its decline toward irrelevance.

p. 21 **For the Unborn or For the Poor?**

p. 23 There are no gradations in the image of God. – Martin Luther King Jr.

p. 24 Your neighbor, according to Jesus, is every other human being.

p. 24 Embracing every person's God-given dignity also enables us to declare a cease and desist on a posture that is prone to taking sides and looking for something or someone to be offended by.

p. 26 ...we are made glorious as the light of God's beauty shines first upon us, and then through us and off us.

p. 27 ...the more we uphold and affirm and celebrate others' dignity as Jesus does, the less prone we will be to take sides in ways that Jesus does not.

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- p. 30 To Jesus, everybody mattered.
- p. 33 When we reduce a human being's rights to live all the way down to a cost-benefit analysis and decide to discard the lives that seem to cost more than they contribute, what will be next?
- p. 33 ...as soon as we decide that *one* form of human life is disposable, we have lost all ability to defend human rights for any form of human life.
- p. 34 We all experience brokenness and cope with need.
- p. 37 Privileged people can have a hard time sympathizing with those who have no idea what it feels like to be privileged.
- p. 37 Poor conditions often breed poor choices. Most poor people cannot control their conditions.
- p. 38 ...those who are poor and living on the margins *need* others who have resources to partner with effective organizations and efforts that are devoted to the vision of Deuteronomy 15...
- p. 38 ...we who are made in God's image need generous hearts and open hands.
- p. 41 **Personal Faith or Institutional Church?**
- p. 44 The number of Christians opting out of church is on the rise.
- p. 45 But would Jesus be in favor of a churchless Christianity? The local church was God's idea.
- p. 48 Part of the Christian experience is learning to love difficult people just as Jesus loves us when we are difficult.
- p. 50 Can we be in relationship with God while opting out of relationship with people – even difficult people – whom he loves?
- p. 51 ...God and the church come to us as a package deal. God never calls us to Himself in isolation. He calls us individually, but never as mere individuals.
- p. 52 Family is the chief metaphor that the Bible uses when it talks about the church.
- p. 53 We believe that the best expressions of community will happen when people come together with varying perspectives, personalities, cultures, and experiences.
- p. 54 Tolerance allows us to keep a safe, comfortable distance. Friendship, on the other hand, welcomes that somebody into our circle. Friendship takes us beyond tolerance to a common life together.
- p. 59 **Money Guilt or Money Greed?**
- p. 59 I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer. – Jim Carrey
- p. 60 God gives us money to steward and share in order to promote the common good, not to hoard and spend solely on ourselves.
- p. 62 The chief concern for the rich and for the poor is whether our hearts are content with what God has given to us.
- p. 65 Our greed can usually be traced back to dissatisfaction about what we have in comparison to others.
- p. 66 We all think that greed is a huge problem. But we rarely think that it is our problem.
- p. 71 When our souls are empty, it becomes natural to have distorted notions of experiences of wealth.
- p. 73 ...the root causes of greed, which are anxiety and fear.
- p. 75 If American Christians began to tithe regularly, global hunger, starvation, and death from preventable diseases could be relieved within five years.
- p. 75 The tithe reminds us that God is our provider, that he is sufficient to meet our needs, and that he, not money, is the ultimate answer to our soul-thirst for safety and validation.
- p. 76 A shrinking net worth can be one of God's greatest hidden blessings.

- p. 76 True freedom is found in the realization that “everything minus Jesus equals nothing” and “Jesus plus nothing equals everything.”
- p. 79 **Part Two: Jesus Outside the Lines of Christianity**
- p. 81 **Affirmation or Critique?**
- p. 81 It is healthy to laugh at ourselves and, if the shoe actually fits, give a conceding nod to our critics.
- p. 82 Jesus was not primarily known for what he was against. He was known for serving people who had needs, feeding people who were hungry, and giving water to the thirsty. If we (Christians) were known primarily for that, then we could cut through so many divisions. – Philip Yancy
- p. 82 Somehow in our efforts to “speak the truth” we have too often forgotten about the love that God intends to undergird the truth.
- p. 82 Jesus was offensive to smug, judgmental, religious people. He was a breath of fresh air to broken, nonreligious people. Can the same things be said about his followers today?
- p. 86 What is it about the human heart that makes us so sensitive to criticism?
- p. 87 We are unimpressed with ourselves because we are not what we think we are supposed to be.
- p. 88 ...we Christians should be the most affirming people in the world. Rather than rushing to find fault, we should proactively seek opportunities to catch others doing good...
- p. 91 ...if we want to follow Jesus, we have no choice but to follow him into the world and into affirming friendships with as many people as we can, including people who do not believe or behave as we do.
- p. 92 The closer we are to Jesus, the further we will be from sin.
- p. 93 Have we grown accustomed to scolding others for certain sins while exempting ourselves from judgment over other sins that we commit daily?
- p. 93 Maybe the problem with the world isn't other people. Maybe the problem with the world is us.
- p. 93 How many people do you know who started following Jesus because someone scolded them, disapproved of them personally, or made it clear how appalling their “lifestyle” is? I have never met one.
- p. 94 Sometimes this means we must critique the people that we love – and also receive critiques from them.
- p. 98 ...we are able to speak truth to people once we have earned the right to be heard. – Jim Rayburn
- p. 98 ...it is not, it never has been, and it never will be a Christians' job to judge non-Christians.
- p. 98 As an incomplete work in progress, everyone is magnificently frail.
- p. 99 **Accountability or Compassion?**
- p. 99 I don't like to commit myself about Heaven and Hell – you see, I have friends in both places. – Mark Twain
- p. 101 We run from criticism, even constructive criticism, because we know that a single word of criticism possesses more power over us than a thousand praises.
- p. 103 ...when we strive for perfection not only do we fail to please others, we fail to please ourselves.
- p. 103 ...a reality that is felt especially by people who experience success. The more accomplished they have been, the more they feel pressure to accomplish even greater things. They don't need anyone to raise the bar for them, because they are always raising the bar for themselves.
- p. 104 We are always one breath away from failure in our own eyes.
- p. 104 Why do words like *mediocre* and *average* sound so repulsive to us?
- p. 107 We will either be welcomed into a life that's better than we've ever dreamed, or we will be cast out into a life that's worse than we've ever dreaded.
- p. 110 To accept that God is a lover but not a judge is a luxury that only the privileged and protected can enjoy.

- p. 114 The good news is that anyone who fears God will never have any reason to be afraid of God.
- p. 115 **Hypocrite or Work in Progress?**
- p. 115 If all our words had to cover all our actions, we would be doomed to permanent silence. – Henri Nouwen
- p. 117 The people of Jesus are woefully unable to represent Christ as Christ represents himself.
- p. 122 Shouldn't we evaluate Jesus on his own merits rather than the flaws of his followers?
- p. 128 It is when we become tired of ourselves, weary of our own failed efforts, that Jesus meets us with hope.
- p. 130 It is in belonging *to* Jesus, it is in being washed, sanctified, and justified *by* Jesus, it is in being *with* Jesus that hypocrites start to become *like* Jesus.
- p. 131 ...we must preoccupy ourselves less with trying to be like him and more with simply being with him...
- p. 131 We are not yet what we are meant to be. We are incomplete works in progress.
- p. 133 **Chastity or Sexual Freedom?**
- p. 138 Our culture of casual sex has led to outcomes that are anything but casual.
- p. 139 Anyone who thinks the Bible is stuffy about sex either hasn't read the Bible or hasn't been paying attention to what it says.
- p. 142 ...one simply cannot make a biblical case for women being inferior to me.
- p. 143 We must never presume to understand what it is like to walk in shoes we will never wear.
- p. 145 Those who are serious about following Jesus must do more than lift a finger to alleviate the burden of aloneness in our midst.
- p. 151 **Hope or Realism?**
- p. 151 The problem of pain and suffering is one of the biggest reasons why people keep their distance from God.
- p. 152 ...hopeful realists are also deeply honest about the difficult circumstances of life.
- p. 154 ...Christianity is incredibly realistic about how messed up the world is.
- p. 157 In the world of God there are many things we do not understand.
- p. 159 Before he fixed a broken situation, *He (Jesus) entered into it and shared it.*
- p. 164 If we know everything that God knows, if we saw everything that God sees...
- p. 165 Jesus invites us to share his perspective – to believe that invisible realities are even truer than the visible ones.
- p. 166 In the end, life will overcome death, joy will overcome sorrow, freedom will overcome bondage, and triumph will overcome loss. Still, we wait.
- p. 168 ...the most repeated command in the Bible is "Do not fear."
- p. 169 ...with this God-given faith, we who are realistic about suffering can also live in hope because the broken reality in which we live is not the ultimate reality.
- p. 171 **Self-Esteem or God-Esteem**
- p. 171 When I get honest, I admit I am a bundle of paradoxes. I believe and I doubt, I hope and get discouraged, I love and I hate, I feel bad about feeling good, I feel guilty about not feeling guilty. I am trusting and suspicious. I am honest and I still play games. Aristotle said I am a rational animal; I say I am an angel with an incredible capacity for beer. – Brennan Manning
- p. 175 We have to pick a side and fight our battle in order to convince God, others, and even ourselves that we are significant, valuable, and worthy of being noticed.
- p. 175 We crave recognition; we desperately want to be *the* best instead of simply being *our* best.
- p. 176 Why do we instinctively "exclude the enemy from the community of humans even as [we] exclude [ourselves] from the community of sinners? – Miroslav Volf

- p. 176 ...the two toxic ingredients that make up the deadly sin of pride...*selfish ambition* and *vain conceit*.
- p. 177 When selfish ambition resides in us, we become threatened by the good fortune of others.
- p. 177 We seem to thrive on the public failure, shame, and misfortune of others.
- p. 179 We want to be praised and noticed.
- p. 179 ...things go south when an appropriate desire for praise morphs into a misplaced hunger for approval.
- p. 180 If we lose the applause, we feel worthless.
- p. 182 The Bible's answer to the "problem of self-esteem" is the virtue of humility.
- p. 183 Why should we choose sides against others in order to feel better about ourselves?
- p. 185 God does not simply bear with you, put up with you, or tolerate you. He actually likes you. He enjoys you. He is proud of you. He esteems you highly.
- p. 187 To be esteemed by Jesus is to be free.
- p. 188 We are not what we are supposed to be. We are incomplete works in progress...
- p. 189 **Living Outside the Lines**
- p. 189 Believing and receiving Jesus is what gives us the right to be part of God's family. We are either part of his family or not part of his family.
- p. 194 Thank you for being willing to consider ideas that matter deeply to me and also to others who, like me, believe that Jesus is the truth.
- p. 195 Loving people should not be seen as a tool for getting access to someone so you can do your work fixing them.
- p. 196 People will figure out whether they like you, want to be close to you, or have anything to learn from you by how you behave, far more than by anything you say.

Top 10 Tips for Christian Evangelism (From an Atheist) – Daniel Fincke

1. Be Like Jesus: Hang with the Sinners and Judge the Judgers.
2. Form Genuine Relationships with People. Don't Treat Them as Projects.
3. Actions Speak Louder than Words.
4. When Talking about Religious and Philosophical Matters, Ask More Questions and Do Less Preaching.
5. Don't Give Unsolicited Advice or Judgments. Support People and Wait for Them to Ask for Your Input if They Want it.
6. Appreciate That Nominal Christians Are Christians Too.
7. Don't Try to Force Others into Christian Participation.
8. Understand Atheists and Embrace the Opportunity Confrontational Atheists Afford You.
9. Respect Other Religions Even As You Evangelize Their Members.
10. Love Your Enemies, Not Just Your Tribe.