



*The Journey*  
Week of 01.17.10

## Jesus Was Not Nice—Nor a Family Guy?

By Michael Maybee

When I opened the email from my sister I got way more than I was expecting. If email can shout, this one was deafening. I felt like one of those cartoon characters with their hair blown straight back and their cheeks flapping in the wind from the roar. Obviously my last offering in our ongoing email dialogue about “who exactly is Jesus?” had struck a nerve.

You need a little back story to understand. I am the only member of my immediate family that does not adhere to the teachings of The Watchtower Society, also known as the Jehovah’s Witnesses. (Without giving a lengthy explanation of why that is a problem, suffice it to say that The Watchtower Society denies the three-in-one nature of God and Jesus’ bodily resurrection.) We were raised primarily in the Baptist church. But in the mid 70’s my sister embraced this group’s interpretation of Scripture. Pretty quickly thereafter, my Mom—who was always searching but never seemed to really find God—converted. My sister’s adult sons went over next, then my brother and his wife. My dad kind of went along because Mom went, but he never really got into it.

My firm stance on who the bible tells me Jesus is has created a division between my family and me. On a practical level, family celebrations with them of all major holidays such as Christmas and Thanksgiving ended forever. As I write this article, I am saddened that even though today is my birthday, it will not be celebrated by that part of my family because the Watchtower Society teaches that such celebrations are pagan. No one in my family except my Dad attended my wedding in 1989 or those of my two adult daughters in 2005 and 2006. I still see my sister and brother, but not as often or under the circumstances I would like.

On a more serious level I believe they are so misled in their beliefs that they may be at risk of spending eternity apart from God. (Space does not allow a detailed explanation of my uncertainty about their standing with God.) Hence the dialogue with my sister about “Who do you say Jesus is?” After years of dancing around the topic and “making nice,” I decided I had to give it one last shot. I had to challenge her beliefs, gently and lovingly, in the hopes that she and the rest of the family would return to the Jesus of the Bible. But, my dialogue with my sister about the nature of God ended abruptly and somewhat painfully. It took several months for us to get back to “making nice.” We stand divided on this topic, but I love Jesus too much to compromise the truth about him so that I can have more of a relationship with my family.

*“Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three.” ~ Jesus in Luke 12:51-52*

*Footnote: I pray regularly that the sincerity of my family’s hearts in seeking him will allow God to shower them with grace and someday welcome them with open arms. My Mom passed away in 1993 and I still pray that in the moments after her departure she stood at Jesus’ side and exclaimed, “Wow, did I get that wrong!” I am pretty sure that my Dad, at 94, is secure because in a recent discussion he said with his characteristic brevity, “I believe that Jesus is God’s Son and that he died for my sins. The rest is details.”*

(You are encouraged to use the SOAP – Scripture, Observation, Application and Prayer Method for a guide. Click [here](#) for an example SOAP journal entry. Page numbers refer to "The Story of God" Bible available for free at the Welcome Center in our atrium.)

## **monday, 01.18.10**

Read: [Luke 14:25-35](#) (pg. 715)

## **tuesday, 01.19.10**

Read: [Matthew 10](#) (pg. 665)

## **wednesday, 01.20.10**

Read: [1 Corinthians 7:1-17](#) (pg. 782)

## **thursday, 01.21.10**

Read: [John 19:17-37](#) (pg. 742)

## **friday, 01.22.10**

Read: [Mark 7:1-13](#) (pg. 689)

If you don't already receive weekly email notification about The Journey, click [here](#) to sign up.

**Grow** (resources to help you in your study)

- **Sunday's Sermon:** Click [here](#) for podcast, or here for [video](#)
- [\*\*Yeshua—A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church\*\*](#) by Dr. Ron Moseley
- [\*\*The Jesus I Never Knew\*\*](#) by Phillip Yancey
- [\*\*I'm Not Hanging Noodles On Your Ears\*\*](#) (and other intriguing idioms from around the world) by Jag Bhalla —Click [here](#) to email Amy Habban to request a copy from Heartland's Bookstore.

**Go** (action steps)

- Join a 1:1 spiritual mentorship by emailing [Britton Gregory](#)
- **GO**—Sign up to serve: email Lisa Zulke by clicking [here](#)
- **GROW**—Join a small group or find about the many other [ways to grow](#)
- **GIVE**—click [here](#) to make an online gift to Heartland and learn how you can set up recurring gifts

Small Group/ 1:1 Question Samplers:

1. What family challenges do you have in your life right now?
2. Per Sunday's sermon, what is your "order of affections?" Are adjustments to your priorities in order?
3. Deepdive: read Mark 7:1-13, how is Jesus trying to preserve the 5th commandment to "honor our Father and Mother?"