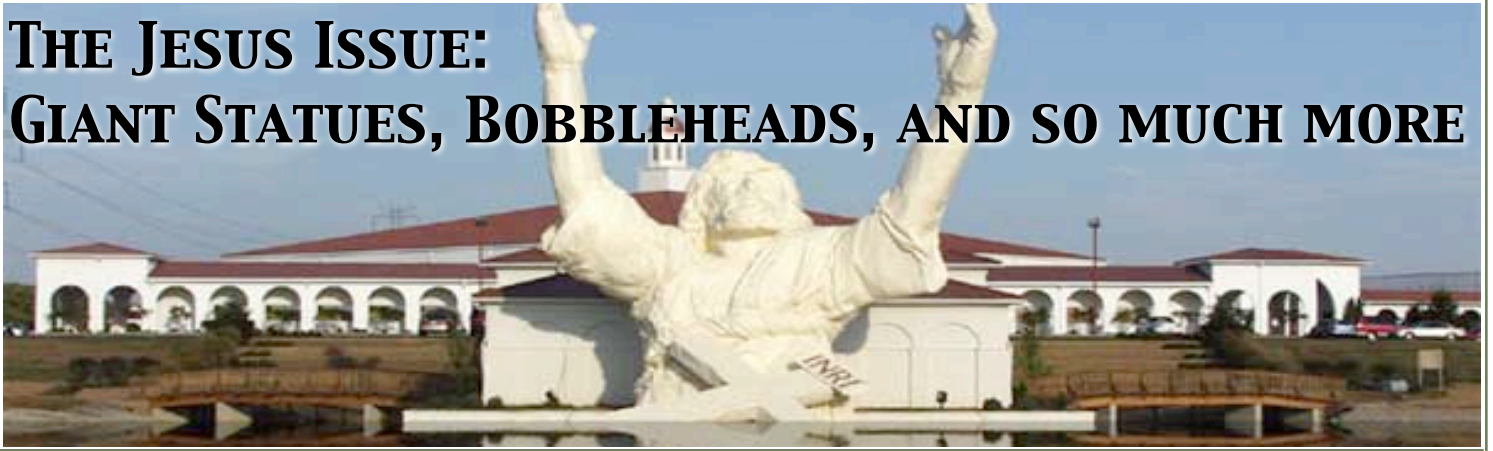


## PARENT LINK

*Keeping Parents Connected*

## THE JESUS ISSUE: GIANT STATUES, BOBBLEHEADS, AND SO MUCH MORE



I BECAME A CHRISTIAN AND ALL I GOT WAS THIS LOUSY T-SHIRT (BY VINCE ANTONNUCI)

Walking through the front door of a church building [for the first time] was like passing through a portal to a different world. So much was unfamiliar. For the first time I heard about “propitiation,” “puppet ministry” and “potluck suppers.” I stood for “fellowship,” knelt for prayer and sat on a hard wooden bench (which they called a “pew”). I saw more polyester in one morning than I had my entire life. I experienced church snack time, which consisted of little pieces of cracker and small plastic shot glasses of grape juice. A man explained that we would be singing hymns 11, 52, 17 and 63. I almost yelled out, “Bingo!”

But it’s now 17 years later. I’ve gotten married. I have two kids. I’ve gained a few pounds. And I’ve gone from having never walked into a church to having 17 years’ worth of Sundays in church buildings. And with all that experience (not to mention the few extra pounds) under my belt, I can tell you that there is something very familiar about most of the Christians I’ve met. Unfortunately, it’s not that they remind me of the people who populate the pages of Scripture.

Instead, they remind me of a little girl named Emily.

Little Emily looks cute in her souvenir shirt that proclaims, “My parents went to Florida and all I got was this lousy T-shirt.” But there’s something sad about it too. She missed the journey. She didn’t get to take part in the adventure. While others broke out of their dull routine, Emily missed the excitement of doing something different. She didn’t get to play in the waves or hug Mickey. She didn’t get to experience the joy. Even the horrifying incident when the tire blew out and Stan, the self-proclaimed “Good Samaritan Redneck,” rescued the family in his Sanford and Son pickup truck has quickly become a fond memory for everybody. Everyone except Emily. She missed the journey.

As I’ve gone to church and met Christians and lived as one myself, I’ve realized something.

*We are Emily.*

When I read about the lives of the first Christians in the pages of the New Testament I see people who actually went “on vacation to Florida,” who truly experienced

the ups and downs of the trip. But when I look around at Christians today, I see people who just wear a T-shirt for an adventure they’ve missed out on. We’re missing the journey. We’re stuck in the same dull routine. We’re missing out on the joy and fear and laughter and doubt and mystery and confusion of following Jesus, of taking great risks for God, of praying dangerous prayers, even of being spiritually attacked.

We wander around with lifeless shark eyes.

**Continued on the next Page...**

Dear Parents,

As you’ve noticed in the past couple of issues of the Parent Link, I’ve tried to mix the content up a little bit by providing some articles from some of my favorite authors, as well as some original content. The lengthy article above and below is an excerpt from a book by Pastor Vince Antonucci entitled: “I Became a Christian and all I Got was this Lousy T-Shirt”. Visit [www.vinceantonucci.com](http://www.vinceantonucci.com) for more.

**Thanks for Reading,  
Luke Dooley**

The more honest among us find ourselves asking questions like: Is this all there is? Is this really what Jesus meant when He said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"?

Is this the life Jesus died for me to have? Didn't Jesus pay too high a price to buy me this life? Am I just supposed to be miserable until I get to heaven?

I think the word that best describes how many feel about their Christian lives is not abundant, joyful or purpose-driven, but disappointing.

And when I met Christians for the first time as a sophomore in college, I was disappointed. I was disappointed at their disappointment. And I swore I would never be like that.

But I have to be honest. Over the years I have, at times, descended into the world of the "T-shirt wearers." I have found myself going through the motions. I've lost my purpose and passion for so long at times, I had to put them on the back of a milk carton. In honest moments I've asked those same despairing questions. I've been disappointed.

And I've wondered if maybe God is the problem. I mean, He does want everyone to say yes to His offer. And if someone is trying to sell me a new car, vacuum cleaner or cell phone, I don't expect them to be completely honest. They'll exaggerate the benefits, ignore the problems. It may still be a great car, vacuum or phone, but I'm not getting the whole truth, and I know it.

*Maybe God is like that.*

The benefits He claims to give to those who say yes to Him include abundant life, pure joy in the face of trials, peace that surpasses understanding, power to heal the sick with our prayers, assurance

that we will never be tempted in a way we can't handle, fearlessness and the promise that we will do greater things than Jesus did.

How many Christians would say these things are a good description of their lives? More personally, does it describe yours?

So maybe God is the problem. Perhaps He's just a master salesman. After all, he's good at everything else. But I don't think so. Actually, I think we're the problem. And I think there's a solution. I think we need to go on vacation.

I love vacation. And, when I'm really living it, I love the Christian life. It's helped me to approach my days with a sense of anticipation, and it's allowed me to break out of my routines and experience adventure.

But, like a vacation, following Jesus is not a perfect life of nonstop thrills. There are some boring and bad parts. But still there's something different about them, simply because I'm following Jesus.

So why are so many Christians disappointed? Is it possible that we, like Emily, are missing out on the journey? Is Jesus calling us to live life with authentic spiritual passion, but we're just wearing the T-shirt, practicing a souvenir religion?

Jesus asks people to follow Him. He's going somewhere, and He wants us to go with Him. He promises that those who follow will experience life fully alive.

Here's the best I can figure. The life God authored for us and offers to us, is this:

**To live life with Jesus, and to live the Jesus life.**

To live life with Jesus is about the inward life. It's me experiencing

the presence of Jesus. It's soaking in all of Him that's out there. It's God impressing Himself on me. It's God changing me.

To live the Jesus life is about the outward life. It's me being the presence of Jesus. It's releasing out all of Him that's in here. It's God expressing Himself through me. It's God changing the world with me.

Since moving to Virginia Beach, I've developed allergies. Recently my wife bought a humidifier for our bedroom. Each morning I have to fill the thing up with water, and the rest of the day it releases that water into the air. I've learned that the humidifier can be turned on and running hard, but it accomplishes absolutely nothing if it's not filled with water.

The Christian life is something like that humidifier. I admit it's a simple analogy, but it helps convey the give-and-take there is in following Jesus. Repeatedly I need to be filled up with Jesus (which happens as I live life with Jesus), and then I need to continuously release Jesus (which happens as I live the Jesus life). I release Jesus because my purpose is to serve others, to touch them with God's love. But I can only do that if I'm filled with Jesus. Otherwise I can run hard, but I won't accomplish anything.

**We've been invited to live life with Jesus and to live the Jesus life. To do that, we need to understand what it means and overcome what holds us back. Then we can lose the T-shirt and experience the adventure.**

# Jesus Christ

*Man? Teacher? Historical figure? Son of God? Savior? Have you ever stopped to think about who this person is that we are still talking about 2000 years later...*

## 5 Common Categories

## Does your description of Jesus fit one of these?

### Jesus:

Often found in one of the following five categories... while not the only ones, these are some common answers you will get when asking the question: *Who is Jesus?*

### 1.) Man

There are several historical documents that prove this... Jesus was born in a little town called Bethlehem, his parent's names were Joseph and Mary, he lived for 33 years. Is that the full story?

### 2.) Teacher

Jesus was a Rabbi. This means he was an extremely wise, well educated person... his teachings were brilliant, even other religions such as Judaism and Islam don't deny this...

### 3.) Son of God

The Bible teaches us that Jesus was the Son of God, and that he came from Heaven to earth, while on earth he was both fully human and fully God! Jesus is the 2nd person of the trinity, and lives today in Heaven with God.

### 4.) Savior

Jesus came to earth so that he could reconnect God's creation with God. Lots of people believe that this is true...

### 5.) Personal Savior

We are all in need of a savior... the Bible tells us this in Romans 3:23. It is not enough though for you to simply believe that Jesus was one of or all 4 of these things. Each person has to choose whether or not Jesus is his or her personal Savior.

## Revolutionary:

**rev·o·lu·tion·ar·y** *n: a radical supporter of political or social revolution*

- Believe it or not Jesus does not fit into these neat little boxes that we have created for him. This might sound crazy, but Jesus did not come down from Heaven so that he could be our "Christian Buddy" and we could wear bracelets with his initials on them.

- Jesus came to shake things up! He saw a way of life that did not please Him. He knew that life was not meant to be lived this way... **He came to show us how life was meant to be lived!** And to give us access to this new life.

- In John 10:10, Jesus says that he did not come simply to give us life, but to give **ABUNDANT LIFE!**

- Everything Jesus did was an example of how we should live our lives... **an example of what abundant life looks like!**

## Counterculture:

**coun·ter·cul·ture** *n: a way of life and set of actions opposed to the social norm*

- Jesus lived His life in such a way that he stuck out everywhere he went... not because of His clothes, his hairstyle, or his rules, but because of his actions and attitude! **Jesus stuck out because of the kind of person he was, and the way he treated others.**

• Jesus was a **Servant** -John 13

• Jesus was a **friend** to the out-cast and the rejected - Luke 19 & Matthew 8

• Jesus was **others centered** -Mark 12 & Matthew 22

## So who is Jesus?

He is someone who came to change your world. Someone who came to show you how to **live a life of humility servanthood and love.** *He is the ultimate example!* At some point we all have to decide who Jesus is in our lives, and what kind of impact we will allow him to make.

**"Who do you say that I am?"**  
-Jesus (Mark 8)

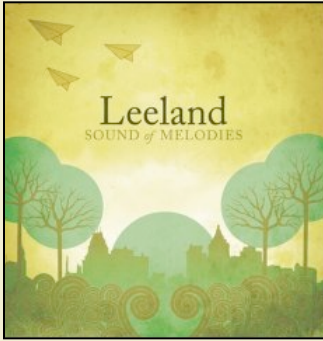
## Picks & Clicks: Our Current Favorite Movies, Music and Websites

### Worship Album

#### Leeland - Sound of Melodies

Leeland is the product of lead singer Leeland Mooring. Oh yea... he's only 18 years old, and sings, writes, and plays like a seasoned vet. A must have in the worship Genre.

Available on iTunes!



### Secular Album

#### Jason Mraz - We Sing, We Dance, We Steal Things

Jason Mraz is a popular voice on the radio. While his new album certainly has some tracks that are must listen (I'm Yours, Details in the Fabric), it also has some non kid-friendly tracks (Butterfly, Love for a Child).



### Movie

#### IronMan- Robert Downey Jr, Gwyneth Paltrow

Regardless of whether you are a fan of the super-hero or comic-book movies, you will get a thrill from IronMan. Great acting, great story, and great special effects make for an awesome movie experience! In Theaters Today...



### Website

#### YouVersion (www.youversion.org)

Youversion is one of the best websites to come around in my opinion. It's a very interactive Bible reading website that enables you to journal, pick favorite verses, and share content with other users. The daily reading tool is also a great feature. Check it out and start using it today!



## UPCOMING EVENTS... DON'T MISS OUT!

WHAT	<b>BIG Beach Bash Overnight Camp Out!</b>	<b>Junior High Camp</b>	<b>Senior High Camp</b>
WHEN	Saturday - Sunday May 7-8 Noon- Noon	June 23-27 Mon. - Fri.	June 16-20 Mon. - Fri.
WHERE	<b>Caesar's Creek Park</b> Drop-off and Pick-up at Lakota East High School	Camp Lebanon Retreat Center	Camp Lebanon Retreat Center
COST & OTHER KEY INFO	<b>Cost is \$25.</b> Medical Release form and payment due <b>June 1st</b>	Cost - \$105 Visit swoacamps.com for more information and to pre-register!!	Cost - \$105 Visit swoacamps.com for more information and to pre-register!!