What Would Jesus Read?

02 Editorial
04 Being a Christian hack
06 Martin Luther’s worm
10 Jesus
12 Uncle Nigel
14 Profile
16 Iconography
22 Jesus & me
24 Just Jesus
26 Q&A
28 Message from the Centre of the Universe
31 Affiliates
32 Jesus & Cannes
34 City guide
36 Contributors & Contacts

Steve Cole
Rob Hutton
Andrew Jones
Carrie Grant
John Marquis
Barry AE Richardson
Si Judd
Rob Schermbrucker
Steve Masseroni
Ann Clifford
Tina Plunkett
Welcome to the ninth edition of Artisan, especially if this is your first experience.

For those of you who haven’t a clue about Artisan let me give you a brief rundown: We seek to be a subversive, underground network who have a vision for facilitating support for anyone who is living out their faith in the Media, Arts and Fashion industries. This support is mainly achieved through industry prayer events around the world and by producing this free quarterly publication, which goes out to around five thousand people. We’re not out to chase headlines or promote names. Our vision is to see thousands of people who love Jesus encouraged and equipped to represent him well in the world’s most influential industries. From this platform the vision is to ultimately see our industries made up of thousands of people pursuing truth and finding it in Jesus.

There are three words that have been the catalyst to the sixty-two prayer events in London and other cities around the world over the past seven years – “Unity, Humility and Prayer”. It’s industry people coming together to elevate Jesus, hear what is going on and pray for one another and these industries. More information about future events and articles from previous publications can all be found online at www.artisaniinitiatives.org

So, back to this edition: it’s simply given the title of ‘Jesus’. If this particular issue consisted of a thousand pages we would still never be able to do justice to the magnitude, influence and impact of this man. However, my hope is that these few articles will simply create a magnetic attraction to the Gospels in order to reinvigorate us with the truth and hope that is found in Jesus.

“I am an historian. I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very centre of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.”
H.G. Wells, British Author (1866-1946)

“I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of people would die for Him.”
Napoleon Bonaparte, French Emperor (1769-1821)

“At a steady rate over the last 20 centuries, in 238 countries over 70 million Christians have been martyred – killed, executed, murdered – for Christ.”
World Christian Encyclopedia

A famous Hollywood film star appeared on the front pages of one of the UK’s biggest selling tabloids yesterday. The photo showed this famous women walking into her London home wearing no shoes. It magnified the soles of her feet with the shocking headline that this film star had dirty feet.

The novelist Chuck Palahniuk suggests that this exaggeration of modern celebrity culture is created out of a need for drama and spectacle. In the book ‘Haunted’ he describes the pattern of creating a celebrity as a god-like figure and, once this image is created, the desire to then destroy it and shame the individual in the most extreme ways possible. Tabloid magazines are the prototype example of this theory.

In an age of reality TV and celebrity why do billions of people see Jesus as the man to emulate and follow? In an age of reality TV and celebrity why do billions of people see Jesus as the man to emulate and follow?

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In many ways our culture has become desensitised to reality and has become satisfied with the artificial. Where is the meat to truly feed the soul? Where is the water to refresh and hydrate the mind? Where is the fire, the passion that ignites the heart? Jesus says follow me.

“I would like to finish by paying tribute to Rob Lacey who died aged 43 on May 1st. Rob was an absolute one off creative who wrote one of his last articles for the Spring edition of Artisan on ‘The Word’. In recent years he wrote, produced and performed under the shadow of cancer and yet, in the midst of incredible hardship, his inspiration and writing was at a level that will no doubt impact generations to come. We continue to pray for his wife Sandra (an amazing dancer) and his two young children Lukas and Magdalene. See www.thewordonthestreet.com

Love to you all,
Steve
Most journalists have no trouble calling on the name of Jesus. They do it constantly, and brilliantly. If you want to hear good swearing go into a newsroom half an hour before deadline.

That's not the only way we like to invoke the Almighty. "Was Jesus a Spaceman?" "Could the Messiah have married?" "Did the Holy Spirit invent cheese?" What a friend newspapers with space to fill have in Jesus.

There are even actual Christians working in journalism. I'm one of them. There aren't loads of us but we get about, and not just at the "respectable" end of the market either. I spent five happy years working for the Mirror, including a wonderful stint at the Sunday People, where they spend so much time investigating sexual indiscretions within the Church that they have their own slang for the subject.

At its best, it's the best job in the world: power without responsibility and lunch on expenses. The people are fun, there's the chance to travel, and the eternal hope that you'll be on the spot when history is made. Even if you're more likely to be there a couple of hours afterwards, that's still better than most people get.

But it's not surprising that there are times when it's not a lot of fun being a Christian in the media. People who feel that believers have no place in a newsroom aren't shy about telling you that you should quit your job. The surprise is that the people you're most likely to hear that from are other Christians.

Now, there are jobs that it's hard to reconcile with a Christian faith - pole dancer, mob hitman, high priest of Baal - but is journalism really one of them?

That's not to say there aren't difficult issues. I got an early break as a trainee when I was the only person in the office after a small plane crash. I had a great day, truly, racing to the site of the crash and then scooping rivals on the story. But I had it at the expense of several lives. Is it still OK to look back at it with pride?

And there are pressures: to write stories that aren't really true, to top up your meagre salary by padding your expenses and hardest of all, to fit in with the culture. How do you avoid gossip when, if you're honest, most great news stories start out with a whispered indiscretion? How do you avoid cynicism when you're constantly lied to? How do you keep your temper when all around are losing theirs? What would Jesus do?

Well, I don't think he would tell us to walk away. If you want a harvest field, where better than a newsroom, where you can be pretty sure the person next to you won't have heard the gospel? Most hacks are pretty hostile, but that's better than indifference.

We set up Christians in Journalism because we wanted a place where we could talk about this stuff without being told the solution was to quit our jobs. Meeting other people who've faced the same pressures means we can give each other support and hold each other to account.

We meet up for beers, for discussion and to pray for each other and our colleagues. We'd like to help them think about Jesus as something more than a space-filler.
Martin Luther, the 16th Century German reformer, loved the book of Jonah. Luther found the gospel all over the book - the belly of the fish (death and resurrection) and Jonah’s name (dove - isn’t it obvious? He’s just like the Holy Spirit!). But it’s at the end of Luther’s lectures on Jonah that things get slightly strange and bizarre. God gets a sheltering vine to grow up over his angry prophet but a worm comes to chew on the vine. Luther says the worm is “Christ and his gospel” eating away at the barrenness of empty religion.

Jesus has an identity crisis in Western culture. Martin Luther’s 16th Century worm – Jesus – evolves into Dan Brown’s 21st Century ‘happily-married-man-with-children’ Jesus. Will the real Jesus please stand up?

The Theology of Charles Mingus

The real Jesus is a human, one hundred percent. The Gospel writers describe him as a flesh and blood man. His conception is supernatural but his birth is normal - labour pains, umbilical cords and crying. If you cut him then he bleeds. If you hit him hard enough then you break his bones. He eats, weeps, walks and laughs. Luke ends his Gospel with the risen-from-the-dead Jesus confronting his terrified disciples. They think he’s come back to haunt them, Jesus says to them, “Look at my hands and feet ... touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (Luke 24:39). He eats fish to make sure that they stop being afraid of Jesus-ghosts.

People struggle with a really human Jesus. It’s too messy, too earthy. Charles Mingus, the jazz musician, tells the story of an argument that he had with his harsh, church-going stepmother. She often shotgunned Bible texts at him. Mingus says that on one occasion he snapped and shouted back at her “Did Jesus ever pee mama? Do the Scriptures say anything about that? And when he did Number Two did he use toilet paper?”

Mingus says his stepmother was so angry at his ‘blasphemy’ that she slapped him.

Mingus was right. Jesus is flesh and blood. There is a grain of truth in the Da Vinci Code Jesus – he did have the physical capacity to marry and have children. But he chose not to go down that route. The Scorsese/Kazantzakis Jesus faces the last temptation to avoid the cross and begin an affair with Mary Magdalene but he resists it. He chooses to die. Jesus really is human and so he is able to identify with us. He knows how hard it is to be human in a broken world. Jesus cries when he is confronted by death and gets angry when he is confronted by injustice and self-righteousness. Jesus is human and so is able to appreciate our work. He has real eyes that can see beauty and real ears that can hear truth. Jesus is really human and so in his death is able to redeem the earthiness of our world...more about that before the end.

Someone Is God Who Had A Common Name

Who is the real Jesus? The real Jesus is God, one hundred percent. One of the poets captures it this way, “Someone is God who had a common name That you might give a child or animal.”

The apostle Paul, an early Christian writer, says this about Jesus, “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 or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:15-17)

Jesus is big. He is so big that when you look at him you see God. This was subversive, inflammatory talk in the 1st Century. It started riots and got people into trouble. On the one hand the Jewish faith rightly taught that God was invisible. There is an old Jewish story about a man called Moses (see Exodus 33:34). Moses was the leader of the Jewish people. He had unprecedented access to God. God would speak to him on a regular basis and give him
Jesus And The Subversion Of Power

This big Jesus who got the early Jewish Christians into trouble at the synagogue also got them into trouble with the ruling Roman government. Here are some official descriptions of Caesar and his Empire:

“He is equal to the beginning of all things. He has restored all things to, you can’t see me. It’d be too much for you.” Moses saw the back of God. The old Jewish story ends by telling us that when Moses returned to the people, his face was so radiant that they were afraid to come near him. To see a man who has seen where God has just been is terrifying. It’s this invisibly glorious God who Jesus makes known. His is his image. If you want to see the God who cannot be seen then look at the flesh and blood Jesus. Can you see how big Jesus is?

The Resurrection Parade

The sting in the biblical tale is the resurrection. Jesus, the crucified God-Man, does not stay dead. Look: “He is the beginning and the first born from the dead so that in everything he might have the supremacy” (Colossians 1:18).

The rabbis used to read the Hebrew Bible to their congregations in exile from Jerusalem. Their listeners had forgotten how to read and understand the language of home so the rabbis would translate as they read. However, their translations were never “straight” - they’d expand and apply the text to the places where their listeners lived. These free translations were called targums. Brian Walsh has taken this traditional Jewish form of commentary and written a targum on Colossians 1:15-20. This is how he ‘targumises’ the passage for us (with the help of Bruce Cockburn and U2):

"In the face of a culture of death a world of killing fields a world of the walking dead Christ is at the head of the resurrection parade transforming our tears of betrayal into tears of joy giving us dancing shoes for the resurrection party And this glittering joker who has danced in the dragon's jaws of death now dances with a dance that is full of nothing less than the fullness of God this is the dance of the new creation this is the dance of life out of death and in this dance all that was broken all that was estranged all that was alienated and disconnected what once was hurt what once was friction is reconciled comes home is healed and is made whole because grace makes beauty out of ugly things."

It’s this vision of the final resurrection party that keeps us following the crucified Jesus in a broken world. The crucified then risen Jesus is so big that one day all his people will be made new in the home of righteousness. “Amen. Come Lord Jesus.”


2 For more on the cult of Caesar see Brian Walsh, “Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire” Downers Grove: IVP 2004.

3 For the whole targum see Walsh P85-89 or get a free download of an earlier version at http://cc.ca.utoronto.ca/articles/index.html/colossians.
What word can describe Jesus, all he is and means? In a world where superlatives are cheap and ‘perfect’ is a word often used to describe a celebrity couple’s relationship after they have been dating for a month, there really is no word that can endorse Jesus enough. For he is ‘The Word’. He is It; He’s the great I am; He’s the event, the all in all, the before, the after and all bits in between; the sum total of everything. And what does this person who has no word big enough, or powerful enough to describe him have to offer? In a word - ACCESS:
Access All Areas to God and his blessings: to forgiveness, to grace, to knowledge, to wisdom, to identity, to security, to satisfaction, to peace, to joy, to love, to wholeness, to comfort and to all things good.

Why then do we find it so hard to enter? What is it that poses such a threat to us accepting his access? Is it a lack of faith, an inability to fully believe he is who he says he is? Or is it an inability to fully receive what he has done on our behalf that stops us?
I am called to respond but for some reason I cannot. He initiates a relationship with me, comes and offers it, stands with arms open wide, welcomes me in. It costs him everything to do this and he is offering his gift to me for free. I am hungry and desperately thirsty. I demand to be fed and yet for some reason I am reluctant to receive. I am unsure of this gift; I am uncomfortable with freebies. Will I buy now and have to pay later? The world has taught me to need, not to trust, to cover my shame, to hide my desperate desire for help.

But finally, for all of those who believe, we come to the point where we respond, we receive, we acknowledge our need and we invite Jesus to be our everything. We have ‘access all areas’ to eternal and abundant life, wholeness, purpose and so many other things. And yet for me, even though I know of his love and grace, bit by bit I begin to invest in the ‘buy now, pay later’ mentality. Surely I have to pay at some point. Surely the bill will be delivered... and with interest. Often the Church or other Christians reinforce my fear. Is grace sufficient to save and yet not to maintain me? Is my Jesus enough?

When Jesus died for us on the cross he didn’t just draw back the curtains in a genteel manner, allowing us a small peek at his glorious riches. He completely decimated the veil, ripped it in two, and perfectly made the way for us to have instant ‘access all areas’ to God, not just for a brief moment but in perpetuity.

And yet my own brokenness tries to reconstruct the veil, to stitch it (badly) back together again and to put a distance between us.

In time his truth prevails and I am brought back to the place of veil-less open intimacy. I breathe a sigh of relief, I shed tears, I am loved, I am secure, I am forgiven. And over more time I begin to notice the more I access him the less I try to pay the bill. What does Jesus mean to us as artists? In a world with screwed up values and an obsession with status we have to remember what he is worth and indeed what we are worth to him? This informs us of who we are and, in turn, allows us to create without boundaries and without fear. We can acknowledge the gift he has placed within and begin to hone and multiply it freely.

Once we have grasped both his worth and our own we are ready to move wherever he takes us. In low places and high places, we can be brought before those with no status or “ushered into the presence of the great.” We can effect change and influence those around us. We can be light and we can shine like the moon by reflecting the Son’s glory.
Who is Jesus?

Jesus, the Christ, the anointed one, the Messiah - this is the Greek translation of the Hebrew. Jesus, in his relatively short life here on earth, claimed to be both man and God. He caused radical waves in the hearts and minds of all who met him. These continue today, two thousand years later. They question, disturb, challenge and provoke the lives of all who come to know him.

The media then, as now, alongside other art forms, has sought a myriad of ways to challenge his claims to be God’s son. No one before him or since has created such diverse interest, radical discussion or revolutionary action: bloody wars have been won and lost in his name.

The Church, the body of belief founded to follow and promote his teachings, must never be one that merely operates on the basis of memory. A true revolutionary is one who lives by, and stands on, revealed truth and not merely emotional gobbledygook. Christianity must fight for its life on the ground that it is rooted in both history and content.

It is possible for everyone today to know the truth of Jesus, not exhaustively but truly. This name predominates over all others in the latter portion of the New Testament (see Colossians 1:11-12). Jesus is all saints are brethren. This name is our creative call today. To be and to become a body of great lovers. In the early suffering Church, and throughout its history, the witness of Jesus’ followers to the watching observing world, although invisible, was immensely impressive. It was as if a huge banner hung over the Greek Roman Empire, emanating from the lives of believers light and love in the lifestyle of the community. This too is our creative call today. To be and to become part of the cutting edge of culture; a people of love in the lifestyle of the community. This too emanating from the lives of believers light and love in the lifestyle of the community.

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Do you think Jesus was creative with God’s brief or meticulous in following it?

What is God’s brief? To make, to create, to bring out of nothing everything; to be and to become; to bring beauty, aesthetics, function and work, into all fullness. How is this achieved? Through Christ. For example, note the dialogue/drama between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3:1-21 with specific references to verses 16-18.

Jesus was completely meticulous in both following and fulfilling that which God the Father had called him to complete (see John 4:34 and John 6:38). Can you be more creative than taking what is dead and useless and giving it to life, vibrancy, purpose and identity? Jesus, by taking up his cross and going into the darkest place, death itself, brings those lost in the dark night of the soul into the brightness of a new and dawning day. The meticulous creative work of Jesus is radical, redemptive and reconciliatory. It is all embracing. In Romans 8:19-22 Jesus deals with “all things”. Can you be more creative than to love your enemy? Jesus needs no supplement. In his work of redemption we can see the creative fullness of divine action.

How is Jesus relevant to the 21st Century community?

Take a look, if you will, at the beautiful doxology - the song at the end of the Letter of Jude, the brother of James (Jude verses 25-26). Jesus was, is, and always will be relevant. He is ever contemporary, always creatively present. When you call upon him he will not bully or shove his way but rather he will constantly nudge, provoke and prompt, even without force. Love always waits to be loved. He comes to give us our true freedom, our inheritance as a unique part of his creation: “if the son shall set you free you are free indeed.” In the dramatic context of Jesus standing before those who would take him out and kill him he speaks of the creative freedom and fullness of knowing the Truth. Jesus is the firstborn of all creation therefore, when he dwells in every member of the creative community, they will be and become a body of great lovers. In the early suffering Church, and throughout its history, the witness of Jesus’ followers to the watching observing world, although invisible, was immensely impressive. It was as if a huge banner hung over the Greek Roman Empire, emanating from the lives of believers light and love in the lifestyle of the community. This too is our creative call today. To be and to become part of the cutting edge of culture; a people of love in the lifestyle of the community.

Can you draw what Jesus’ expression was when he was kissed by Judas?

My strong image is that of an eye with tears coming forth from it. I would add two poems, the first by George Herbert:

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey’d love, observing me grow slack.
From my first entrance in
Draw nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack’d anything.

And this from CS Lewis:

Love’s as warm as tears,
Love is tears.
Pressure within the brain,
Tension at the throat,
Deluge, weeks of rain,
Haystacks afloat, Featureless seas between Hedges, where once was green.

NIGEL GOODWIN

ARTISAN’S OWN AGONY UNCLE TACKLES QUESTIONS AROUND THIS ISSUE’S THEME

Uncle Nigel

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I am a sound designer. As a child, I spent hours with “Read Along” record books. I'd adjust the playback speed on my child-safe record player, I'd rub my fingers over the needle, I'd scratch the record back and forth, I'd let a record skip forever. I loved these sounds. It was as if, in the “mining” of these storybook recordings, I was finding sonic jewels that the makers of these records never knew were there. I'd show my discoveries to friends. In return, I'd receive blank stares, or perhaps a quizzical, concerned brow.

I continued this line my entire life, from reel-to-reel, to cassette, to digital tape, to hard disk, unpacking and re-contextualizing sounds. For a time to achieve a musical end, but ultimately to explore my relationship with the world around me. The richness I found, the density and texture of the invisible sonance continually enveloping us fascinates me to no end. How much it’s taken for granted. At this moment, thousands of frequencies are being knit together, creating the tapestry of a car passing by, or a tree groaning in the wind. Why? For the sake of communication.

It is the reality of these incessant, invisible, integral events dancing all around that continue to provide me with the groundwork to pursue a relationship with God. In exploring segments of time (ie, recordings) I’ve come to understand the inherent potential of every moment. For example: If I can manipulate, process, twist and turn a single seven second audio recording into a 6 minute song, and if that is just one moment, what does that say about the potency contained within the myriad moments of our lives? This has exploded from the context of sound to the manifesto of my life. It has allowed me to see, precisely, that God is here, in each and every moment offering up everything in his arsenal to communicate with us; to engage us across the board, from surface to core.
Iconography

VISUAL ESSAY
The image of Jesus we portrayed, though flawed in so many respects, touched a deep chord in the collective subconscious of many we encountered.

The high-pitched screeching of brakes arrested my attention. I turned my head, muscles tensed as I saw a large thick set, leather-jacketed man jump out of his car and approach, with pace and intent, a man of slighter build, his face dressed with the clothes of glazed inebriation. Ugly incidents of road rage take and comments: “Keep up the fight! I suddenly felt an inward resistance. The abruptness of the situation had momentarily driven the context from my mind and in an instant I remembered I was in fact dressed as the stereotypical Jesus of people’s Sunday school years – sandals and long white robe, beard and flowing hair. I imagined the impact upon these feuding men of seeing Jesus running toward them in deepest Soho shouting, “STOP! No!” Would the dramatic intrusion diffuse the situation as mouths agog and bemused they beheld me in awe? Would they find in me a common target for their frustrations and beat me to a pulp? Would “CHRIST STOPS SOHO SKIRMISH” be tomorrow’s tabloid headline?

The issue of how people would react to the stereotypical, iconic image of Jesus captures the very heart of the project Michael Gough and I embarked upon in the summer of 1997. Michael’s idea was to dress an actor in the costume of the stereotypical Jesus, transfer him to the wilds of Soho, set him loose to roam amongst the people and to strike various standard poses of sacred imagery, then photographically record the results. We repeated the project in 2005 and managed to set up in London’s financial district, as part of “Presence” celebrating the 150th anniversary of BibleLands ministry. The minute we set foot on the streets there was reaction. Glances, double takes and comments: “Keep up the good work” “What are you trying to do?” “Are you Jesus?” Michael, who lives in central London and is more familiar with people’s apathy, was very surprised with the level of response we evoked. At one point I found a group of lads bowing at my feet! At our very first site, before Michael had set his camera, someone else was already snapping. Later, the video cameras were out. However, it was comforting to experience the ever-faithful silence and blank expressions of the ‘Tube Phenomenal’!

I have always wanted to play Jesus. Since my school years I have been committed to breaking down the misconceptions surrounding Christianity. The words of Saint Irenaeus epitomised my approach to the role: “The Glory of God is a human being fully alive.” Instead, the mandate for this job was to portray a passive, serene, almost weak Jesus, the Jesus of so many children’s Bibles and ill-conceived art. I was being asked to play the stereotype I had always railed against, in order to actually raise questions in people’s minds about who the real Jesus was and is. The most difficult acting challenge was in regularly reminding myself of this and denying the impulse of stepping out of character. However, for me the ends justified the means.

Contrary to these concerns we found much resonance with the biblical narrative as so many of the poor and homeless found this image of Christ attractive and accessible. We experienced enough to fill a book of stories! In Piccadilly, near Eros, the punk who unsteadily walked towards me, kissed and hugged me and began to talk, the encounter with a homeless guy in Soho Square who could have doubted as striking John the Baptist. We also caught the eye of and posed for the official ‘OK’ magazine photographer in Hyde Park. Two further stories come to mind.

Michael had wanted some pictures of Jesus chatting in a brothel. The hostess of the brothel told me that when her mother had died she had kept only one of her possessions. That item was a picture of Jesus, which she now kept at home on her bedside table. When she had seen me earlier, walking the streets, and I met her gaze directly, she saw that picture looking back at her. The hostess is a brave woman. She had been a little nervous initially about the taking of picture, in case we were undercover police. We explained about the project and owe her a debt of gratitude for trusting us.

On entering a tunnel on our way to Hyde Park, Michael and I could hear shouting at the other end. As we progressed the volume increased and we could see a lady in her mid-fifties dressed in a haphazard bundle of rags, her black hair matted with filth, bottle in hand; she seemed trapped in a world of her own. As we got closer her language echoed around us until she was about twenty-five feet away, then the noise level began to subside. The closer she got now, the quieter she became until, when about ten feet away...nothing. Hushed and fully quietened she left the tunnel in utter silence. What broke through to her? A childhood memory? Hallucination? Fear? Anger? A simple question or shock? The power of Christ’s image? We left the tunnel humbled yet charged.

Taking this opportunity led to a breathtaking, profound, thoroughly enjoyable and incident packed two days. Fortunately, I did not have to risk life and limb as the potential scuffle I mentioned at the start of this piece came to nothing.

As the days progressed, I observed that the image of Jesus we portrayed, though flawed in so many respects, touched a deep chord in the collective subconscious of many we encountered. Some cultural commentators have suggested that during this new millennium many will take stock and consider things spiritual, perhaps even apocalyptic. We therefore consider this project both timely and relevant. Our prayer is, as Jesus is placed at the top of the agenda, that many questions about him will be raised and that more of the truth, the person behind the image, will emerge.
I'm thinking of starting a campaign and I'm calling on all like-minded Christians to join me on my crusade. I've even come up with a slogan: "No Say Just" (OK, this still needs a bit of work). The movement has a very simple manifesto: to cut out the use of the word 'just' when praying. I'm not talking about its use in the proper context; I mean when we pepper our prayers with it like it's going out of fashion.

It doesn't happen in any other area of my conversational life, so why is it that when I'm talking to Jesus I suddenly find myself unable not to say 'just' every other word? "Jesus, I just want to thank you"... "Just help me with this"... "Just come and be with me now"... "Just, just, just." What's going on? And what does it actually mean? If you take it literally, the subtext that rears its ugly head is this: "I don't want to bother you Jesus, but if you wouldn't mind helping with this, that'd be great. If you're not too busy that is. And it's just this. Nothing else." Even if it's unintentional, it implies that I only want Jesus to affect certain parts of my life; that others are for me alone.

I have a confession to make. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, I have had countless moments in my career where I haven't involved Jesus at all. Why? It's almost as if I don't want to 'trouble' Him with the issues I face at work, a sort of "You wouldn't understand, I'll muddle through on my own" attitude. And this flies in the face of all the evidence – Jesus has never once let me down, despite my own flakiness.

But why do I do this? Perhaps it's because I subconsciously feel that Jesus wouldn't be able to relate to writing; that His M.O. is turning water into wine and bringing people back from the dead, not desperately searching for the best ad tag to stop people switching channels in the middle of Emmerdale, (though soaps have been known to bring people back from the dead too I suppose). Besides, what would Jesus know about writing? He never wrote anything did He? Wrong.

In John 8 we are told the following: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought [Jesus] a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no-one condemned you?' 'No one sir,' she said 'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared." Even though we're not told what Jesus wrote, it obviously did the trick and surely the power of writing has never been more powerfully demonstrated than here. Is this 'just' Jesus?

Even though three years ago you'd told me that I'd be where I am now, I'd have laughed you out of the room. Despite the fact that Jesus has opened so many incredible doors for me, only now am I really starting to give Him the credit He deserves and in return, He, the supreme editor, is chopping out the bits in me that I need to lose. Jesus cares passionately about writing, about media and about how we, as His representatives on earth, affect it. He wants us all to get involved and involve Him in it all. And I for one just really, just really want to just say thank you.
What part of the industry are you involved in?
A few years ago I found myself in the deep end of the commercials and media industry in Cape Town, surrounded by amazing people who made sure that I did not drown. It remains a privilege and a pleasure to be involved in an industry that has the potential and ability to communicate life-changing stories powerfully and creatively.

What does the Arts Media picture in South Africa look like?
South Africa is world renowned for its skilled people within this industry. Creativity and ability are in abundance and opportunity is catching up with increasing acceleration; it makes for a pretty picture. Somehow we remain isolated, competitive, suspicious, critical and thus disempowered... This however, is about to change!

What is the greatest piece of advice you have been given in your career?
Never worry about what may or may not happen; simply focus on what needs to be done and do that. There is no greater joy in life than doing what others say is impossible to do.

Have you been financially broke and if so how did you deal with that time?
Numerous times! I do not regret putting everything on the line. Looking back, I was provided with significant people through it who dramatically influenced my faith and perspective on life. One thing I know for certain: if you get knocked down six times... stand up seven.

Paul, John, George or Ringo?
There is a generation in South Africa who wouldn’t even know who we are referring to. Ringo always looked the funniest!

Matthew, Mark, Luke or John?
I love reading Mark and imagining how as a young man he watched and soaked everything in. What an exciting life!

What is your vision for your industry?
That God would use the men and women in the industry to glorify His name, as they set a new standard of righteousness and justice. I am praying that the spirit of competition, suspicion and criticism would give way to unity, humility and prayer so that we can become the instruments and agents of change that He intends.

How do you react to criticism?
I try to constantly remind myself where it stems from... can’t seem to stop my cheeks getting flushed though!

Last thing you read that inspired you?
"The man who changed his times – William Wilberforce". It made me realise that it is possible to face the giants of society and know that with God, wisdom and perseverance we can take them down and change the world.

Most challenging film and most entertaining?
The South African film ‘Totsi’ challenged the way I viewed criminals in this country. It painted their humanity, gave them a face and a story. ‘Braveheart’ and ‘Gladiator’ were hugely entertaining films that left me expecting more of life and made me want to be a better man.

A song / album that is a must for the iPod?
“Have you not heard” by Alistair Gardener.

What has been your biggest encouragement?
Watching men and women come alive in Christ and step into their purpose in life. It is like watching a fireworks display.

Spiritual input when away from home?
Home or away, I would challenge you to find me without God’s word nearby. I have yet to find anything better to lift my Spirit and encourage my soul.
The state of Kansas is both the geodetic center of North America and the geographic center of the lower forty-eight United States. This is true when you look at a map or globe and is now true in cyberspace. Go to Google Maps (maps.google.com) and zoom in – you end up in Kansas. Kansas may be the geodetic center but, as Dorothy says to Toto, in my tweaked version of the Oz tale, “The center of the world is not in Kansas anymore.” So, if the center isn’t Kansas, where is it? A friend was in Delhi checking in to a hotel. When the Indian clerk asked where he was from he responded, “California, USA.” “Ah, yes” said the clerk, “the center of the universe.” “What do you mean?” said the Californian. The clerk replied: “The place least resistant to new ideas is the center of the universe.”

California? Center of the universe? That’s something coming from a hotel clerk in the land of a million gods. If California is the center I would argue that, because of her affection for new ideas, San Francisco is the epicenter. The nuclear fission bomb originated in the San Francisco area (Oppenheimer / UC Berkeley, 1942), and ideas of similar magnitude are constantly exploding here, sending concentric shockwaves outwards to the ends of the earth. Each of the following ideas either originated or were revolutionized within the San Francisco Bay Area: Computer, Internet and digital technology, digital audio and visual special effects technology, non-linear editing, computer animation innovation, innovative gaming technology, P2P music and video file sharing, film maker revolutionaries, sexual politics, political, social and art movements, and many more. Who could argue these ideas haven’t rocked world culture? There’s a reason these ideas have sprung from this San Francisco epicenter – here there is authenticity and little resistance to originality.

San Franciscans worship at the cult of authenticity, where being real is synonymous with being morally right. For this reason authentic faith alone will work here – Christianity can’t be faked. San Franciscans detect hypocrisy miles from the city limits; their most acute resistance is toward recycled, reproduced or fake ideas.

The principle applies everywhere: People look at our lives for authenticity first and listen to our words second. Jesus said, “When they see your good works (not when they hear our sermons) they will glorify God in heaven.” St. Francis of Assisi, after whom San Francisco is named, said: “Preach the Gospel at all times and, if necessary, use words.” People listen with their eyes. They hear what they see. They look for authenticity whether consciously or not. If we wish to produce good works or good art – art that causes one to stop and notice – we must strive to be authentic. This rule applies to both sacred and secular artists. It’s about putting what we profess in alignment with how we live. Authentic faith produces authentic artists who produce authentic art.

Authentic artists will create art that will turn the cultural world upside down. We will achieve artistic authenticity when we stop mimicking trendsetters and start setting trends; when we redefine genres and create new ones; when we are being imitated. Once we engage culture by producing authentic art, we’ll give birth to bodies of work that will be inspired, authentic, meaningful: art that will be soul breathed, whose structural and artistic integrity will stand the test of time, consciously and unconsciously provoking contemplation of the divine.

So, is San Francisco the center of the world? To some, yes. Others, however, may consider the true center to be a place of more ancient origins. Jerusalem two thousand years ago birthed the most authentic, world-changing idea ever conceived. If God is the great cosmic Artist, then His self-portrait – drawn in the life of Jesus the Christ – is His masterpiece. Utterly authentic, He is an art form that transcends time, evokes intense feelings of love and hatred, and is seen through a plethora of interpretations, reviews, and commentaries. Once viewed, he can neither be ignored nor forgotten. Isn’t that what art is supposed to do in the first place? Jesus, help us to be authentic artists...

The first Artisan prayer event will be happening in San Francisco in November. Details will be confirmed very soon online.
Did you know that every time you use a search engine you’re generating cash? Global web search revenues are worth billions each year and they’re growing fast. Everyclick is a new internet search engine that has been set up to make sure some of this money goes to charity. It provides all the usual search engine services – and a few extra ones – but the big difference is that 50% of its gross revenues will be given to charity.

Artisan is one of the charities listed by Everyclick, so to help us benefit visit www.everyclick.com and register, selecting Artisan Initiatives Charitable Trust as the charity of your choice. Then your search activity could generate around £12 per year to Artisan at no cost to you or to us!

If 1000 people come on board, this could pay for two Artisan publications.

Please support us in this simple way. Thank you.

www.everyclick.com
Support Artisan by just surfing the internet.
This was the fifth time of going to Cannes for Katrina Moss and me, but the first time for our other director, Martina Nagel. For the first four years Katrina and I had been trying to get interest, funding and co-production for our production company Eagle Films, for our slate of films that we have been developing over the last ten years. For the first time we went with a product, our first low budget feature called “Shaking Dream Land” starring Philip Winchester (Flyboys, Thunderbirds) and Jesper Christensen (The Interpreter, Manslaughter).

This time we had something to sell. We booked our screening, did our publicity, sorted our trailers, contacted hundreds of buyers all over the world, made our meetings, re-branded ourselves and went to the market with our product.

Cannes is a complex place to be. It is alternately exciting and devastatingly difficult, beautiful and disgusting (some of the films seem spawned from hell), wonderfully friendly alongside the knowledge that you are an outsider knocking on the door wanting to be let in, and generally spiritually overwhelming as you feel caught up in a maelstrom of spiritual warfare that only the angels of God can fight.

God tells us not to be afraid as we walk into the new lands He has for us. He says, “Do not be afraid” many, many times in the Bible. Katrina, Martina and I are mere minnows in a sea of Great Whites and yes, the temptation is to be afraid, to be intimidated, to listen to the lies that at times shout in your ear that “NOBODY IS INTERESTED! NOBODY WILL BUY YOUR FILM! YOU ARE NOTHING AND NOBODY!”

However, that is not how God sees any of this or us. I think that if God tells me not to be afraid then my responsibility is to choose not to be. If I then get attacked (the first year thieves stole stuff out of our car whilst we were still in it!), physically damaged (the first and this year I got bitten by a spider, which caused a lot of discomfort), exhausted and completely spiritually depleted, then it is His responsibility to protect (nothing vital was stolen), heal (last time my bite took a year to heal, this time a week), energise (we experienced incredible unity and great fun together and that wasn’t just the champagne!) and to fill us with His Holy Spirit.

My God is good, my God is true, my God is faithful, my God loves me and my friends and He also loves all the people we met in Cannes.

However, let me tell you what made my heart truly sing: When I write it is my worship. I love to write and I love to worship God. In creating I dance with my Father, my Jesus and the wonderful Holy Spirit. A while ago I locked myself away for a few weeks and wrote the script. Katrina, Martina and I then made it into a film. It’s a good film. It tells a good story. It works. In Cannes, in 2006, a little bit of the grace of God was shown twice (unexpectedly) in a godless place. If no one else ever came to see it, God saw it. He saw us worshipping Him, and I know He loved it.
It is said to be "The City of Sails" and though this is true, settled between three harbours, forty-eight volcanoes and more than fifty islands, the literal translation for Tamaki Makau Rau, the Maori name for Auckland, is actually "The City of 100 Lovers" because it was a place desired by all and conquered by many.

As New Zealand's largest city she draws on a wealth of culture from her Maori history, European and Asian immigrants starting in the late 1800s, and boasts one of the world's largest Polynesian population, culminating in a true cosmopolitan society.

Auckland is reputed for her natural beauty and surrounding water. The must do sights around the city are heavily associated with these two aspects - jumping on the downtown ferry to Devonport, to Bastion Point, the Marae (Home) of Ngati Whatua iwi (tribe), One Tree Hill/Mt Eden, harbour swims and ice cream at Mission. The west coast beaches Piha, Karekare, Bethels and Muriwai are a must, inspiring in their beauty and isolation.

Eating should be fresh and involve part of the sea, from fish and chips on the beach through to the pricier option of the fresh seafood at Mikano restaurant (situated on the waterfront). Great cheap eats can include Satya (Southern Indian) in K Rd, the RSA in Piha, Tanuki's Cave in Upper Queen St or just go for a wander along Ponsonby Road and eating time and see what takes your fancy. Cafes to look out for are Roasted Addiction in Kingsland, Verona in K Rd (so world famous in NZ that it has a song written about it), Brazil in K Rd or my second home, Safran in Newmarket. Drink of choice, aside from all the beautiful NZ wines, would be 42 below feijoa or passionfruit vodka at the Gypsy Tea Rooms in Grey Lynn...perfection!

A day trip worth doing (or stay over if you can) is Waiheke Island, which is about 35 minutes from the city by ferry and is well worth a trip for its beautiful location, food (check out Stonyridge, Mudbrick or Te Whau), its amazing vineyards and vineyards, its beautiful beaches (either in the heart of the island or with a bit of a trek or swim, in isolation) and you can also usually catch a great concert or three. Then wander around the island viewing purpose-built sculpture for a sculpture in the gulf installation.

My pick of places in Auckland would be K Rd (Karangahape Rd), which sits at the top of town. It highlights the complete diversity that we have in our city. It is a mixture of amazing clubs/bars (Wine Cellar, Khuja, Supper Club and 420), restaurants/cafés (Satya and Verona...as mentioned), galleries (see below) and shops (Buana Satu, iko iko and the Hard to Find bookshop), as well as the people. Musicians, artists, every ethnicity, every religion, every style, ministers through to drag queens. This is one road in Auckland that is well and truly alive.

If shopping takes your fancy then head to High St. You are at the home of some NZ greats...Trelise Cooper Nom D, Karen Walker, Zambesi, Stella Gregg, Insidious Fu, Superette, Workshop and World, or for a bit more on the street wear side head up to K Rd for Illicit Clothing, Misery and Huffer.

Galleries On K Rd: Disrupt is very up and coming, NZ artists, predominantly street and graffiti based art; Illicit which is a tattoo/piercing/clothing shop/gallery well worth popping in and checking out the different artists' works. Also on K Rd are the Michael Lett Gallery which shows and sells great NZ artists likeMichael Parekowhai and Kathy Aplin, Artspace and the NZ Film Commission while Whitespace is nearby. Although it isn't in K Rd, Eon Design Centre in Freeman's Bay is well worth the trip. It is a retail/showroom specialising in NZ design by NZ designers and artists. Churches: There is a nice choice of churches in the central Auckland area. I would recommend CCC - Christian City Church - in Newton. The 7pm youth service is worth going to just to break out of the mold; they have 25 primal youth churches that have planted round the world and two other services if you’re not so brave. Also in Newton is CLC Christian Life Centre, and in Ponsonby there’s The Edge with some amazing community and arts based projects coming out of there. In the City there is St Paul’s, born out of St Mary’s London who run SPAM - St Paul’s Arts and Media Group.


Dance: Back Grace Dance Company, Royal New Zealand Ballet.


WHICH ONE WAS IT THAT HELD THE NAILS AND THEN HAMMERED THEM INTO PLACE?
DID HE HIT THEM OUT OF ANGER, OR A SIMPLE SENSE OF DUTY?
WAS IT A JOB THAT HAD TO BE DONE, OR A GOOD DAYS WORK IN THE OPEN AIR?
AND WHEN THEY CLAWED PAST BONE AND BIT INTO WOOD, WAS IT LIKE ALL THE OTHERS, OR DID HISTORY SHUDDER A LITTLE BENEATH THE HEAD OF THAT HAMMER?
WAS HE STILL THERE, PACKING AWAY HIS TOOLS, WHEN IT IS FINISHED WAS UTTERED TO THE THRONG, OR WAS HE AT HOME WASHING HIS HANDS AND GETTING READY FOR THE NIGHT?
WILL HE BE AMONG THE FORGIVEN ON THAT DAY OF DAYS, HIS SIN HAVING BEEN SLAIN BY HIS OWN SAVAGE SPIKE?
He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53:2-5