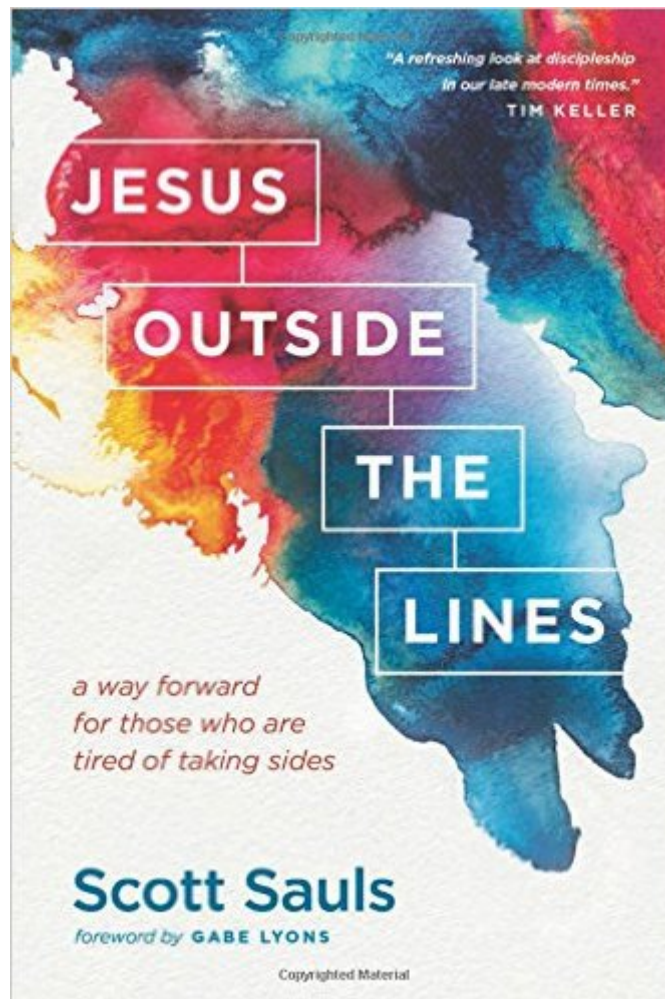


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Jesus Outside The Lines: A Way Forward For Those Who Are Tired Of Taking Sides



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A powerful, practical little volume! I requested Jesus Outside the Lines because of the subtitle. Who isn't tired of taking sides? I can turn on the radio these days and my head starts spinning. So many issues, so many debates, so many hot topics.... How do we pick our battles? And is that even an analogy we should use? Are these confrontations to win or opportunities to engage? This book claims to point to a way forward. Does it deliver? Yes. For me it did. Scott Sauls has arranged this book around ten contemporary areas of division, in our politics, piety, fiscal policy, and posture towards others. Red State or Blue State? For the Unborn or for the Poor? Personal Faith or Institutional Church? Money Guilt or Money Greed? Affirmation or Critique? Accountability or Compassion? Hypocrite or Work in Progress? Sexual Freedom or Chastity? Hope Or Realism? Self

Esteem or God-Esteem? These chapters are not in-depth sermons about each issue that tell you what to say and think. Instead, this book calls us back to foundational Gospel truths, allowing us to think about what that means for these issues. Sometimes I wish he'd had more room to explore the nuances of things, most particularly in the chapter on organized church. As always, we have to define the church first, as a family, not a building or program. And once we've said that, then people will ask why the family has to gather weekly on Sunday, in a stuffy/drafty/formal/unaesthetic building. "If you're hooking up with fellow Christians, challenging, counseling, and communing with each other, isn't that church?"

For me, the best books are those that make me think outside my own box and encourage conversation about things that aren't always comfortable. This is one of those books. I confess I began reading it with some hesitancy because often, and even within the church, to disagree with someone or to not take the politically correct stance is automatically labeled as intolerant, judgmental, or being un-Christlike. Unfortunately, there are a growing number of Christian books that take that approach but I was glad to discover this author didn't. Instead, his focus is that not every issue needs to become a battle or a reason to take sides; that we can hold to our convictions while not attacking those who do not agree with us. He prefers to label disagreements as critiques in which we ask questions and critique opposing views in light of scripture rather than see the person as the enemy or the idea as an argument to be won at all cost so we can be the one who was the most right. As he advises, "Critique when you must - affirm when you can" (p. 98). It's a good filter to use. The chapters include the topics of politics, moral and lifestyle choices, wealth vs. poverty, and several other issues that can cause division even though not all are specifically biblical issues (being a Republican vs. a Democrat or how we spend or make our money, for example). The chapter that spoke the most to me was Self-Esteem or God-Esteem that dealt with the issue of pride and caring too much about how others see us instead of who we are in Christ. Often it is pride that drives the need to be right and it's a message I needed to hear as I try to keep the grace filter in place when encountering those I don't agree with.

Pastor Scott Sauls attributes much of his formation as a pastor to Tim Keller, under whom Sauls served at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York. I don't know how much of Sauls's writing can be attributed to Keller, but they do share a style that is pastoral, thoughtful, and substantive without trivializing their subjects. Sauls's new book *Jesus Outside the Lines: A Way Forward for Those Who are Tired of Taking Sides* fits that description. Sauls starts out with a few hot-button

issues of Christianity, ones which divide Christians to an extent, but which especially divide Christians from secular culture. He calls on Christians not to be sucked into an "us vs. them" mentality, but to, on the one hand, recognize that "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." On the other hand, "if we want to follow Jesus, we have no choice but to follow him into the world and into affirming friendships with as many non-Christians as we can." When thinking and living like Jesus, Christians will be slow to condemn, but quick to befriend and offer hope. Sauls clearly upholds a pro-life perspective, but calls on Christians to value all of life. As C.S. Lewis wrote, we never meet a mere mortal. Every person has dignity and value, whether born or unborn. Similarly, he does not condone homosexual acts or approve of gay marriage; he writes that "no counter-voice can be found in the Bible that suggests a favorable view of homosexuality." Yet he calls on Christians and the church to recognize the struggle of those attracted to others of the same sex and to be a place where redemptive friendship can be found.

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